

A
PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS
AND
ILLUSTRATION
OF SOME OF
SHAKESPEARE'S
REMARKABLE CHARACTERS.

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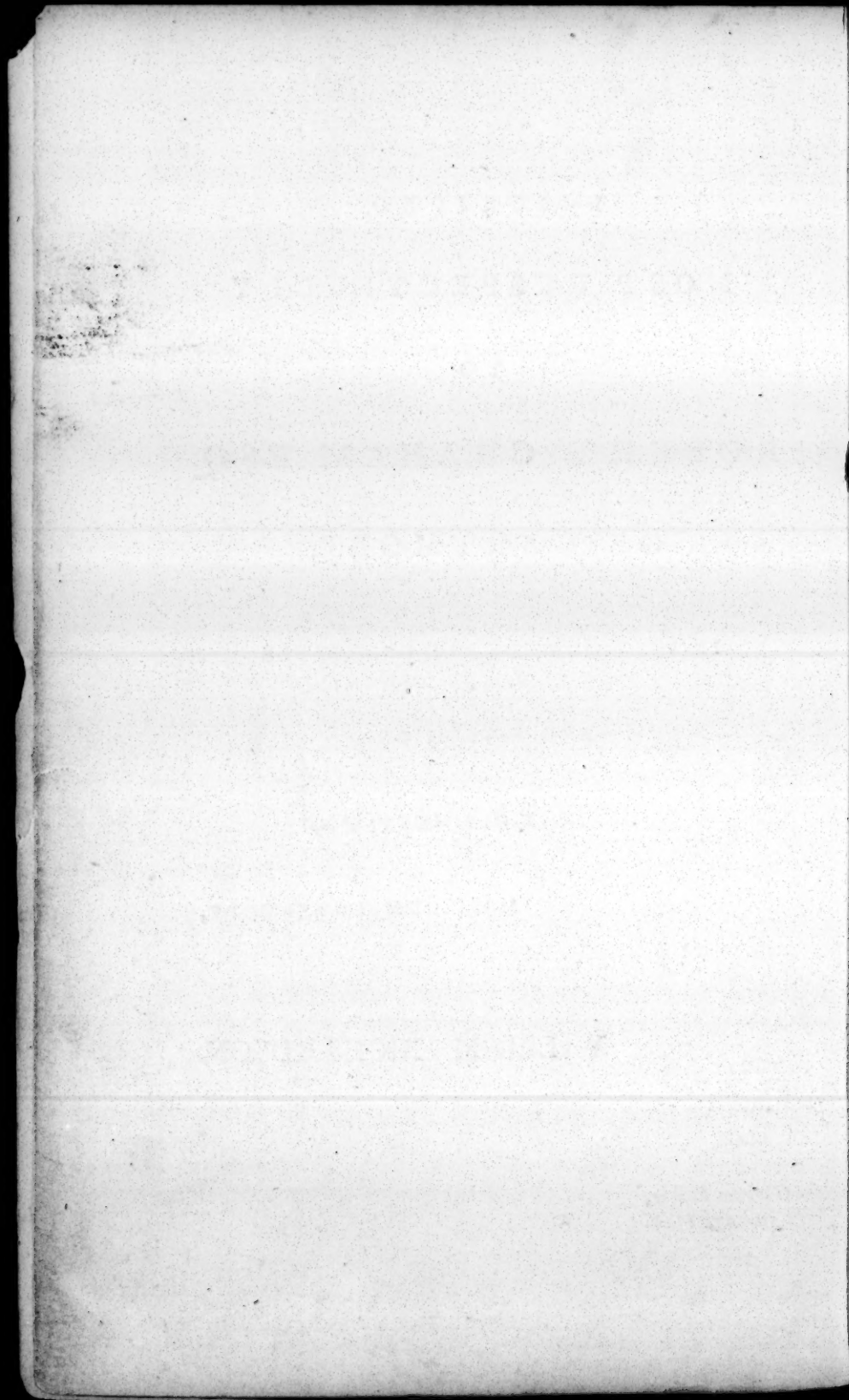
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M D C C L X X I V .



INSCRIBED
MOST RESPECTFULLY
TO
ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.
OF GARTMORE,
IN TESTIMONY OF THE GRATITUDE
AND ESTEEM OF
HIS MOST OBEDIENT, AND
MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,
WILLIAM RICHARDSON.

*Glasgow College,
January 1780.*



INTRODUCTION.

MORALISTS of all ages have recommended Poetry as an art no less instructive than amusing; tending at once to improve the heart, and entertain the fancy. The genuine and original Poet, peculiarly favoured by nature, and intimately acquainted with the constitution of the human mind, not by a long train of metaphysical deductions, but, as it were, by immediate intuition, displays the workings of every affection, detects the origin of every passion, traceth its progress, and delineates its character. Thus he teaches us to know ourselves, inspires us with magnanimous sentiments, animates our love of virtue, and confirms our hatred of vice. Moved by his striking pictures of the instability of human enjoyments, we

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moderate the vehemence of our desires, fortify our minds, and are enabled to sustain adversity.

Among the ancient Greeks, the study of the Poets constituted an essential part in their celebrated systems of education. Plutarch observes, in his treatise on this curious and interesting subject, that, as mandrakes planted among vines, imparting their virtue to the grape, correct its acidity, and improve its flavour; so the poetic art, adorning the precepts of philosophy, renders them easy and agreeable. Socrates, according to Xenophon, was assiduous in applying the works of Homer and Hesiod to the valuable purposes of moral instruction. Discouraging on the character of Thersites, he displayed the meanness of calumny, and the folly of presumption; he argued, that modesty was the companion of merit, and that effrontery was the proper object of ridicule and reproach.

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proach. Discourſing on the ſtory of Circe, he illuſtrated the fatal effects of intemperance ; and rehearſing the fable of the Syrens, he warned his diſciples againſt the allurements of falſe delight. This great teacher of virtue was ſo fully convinced of the advantages reſulting from the connection of poetry with philoſophy, that he aſſiſted Euripides in compoſing his tragedies, and furniſhed him with many excellent ſentiments and obſervations. The propriety of beſtowing attention on the ſtudy of human nature, and of borrowing aſſiſtance from the poets, and eſpecially from Shakeſpeare, will be more particularly illuſtrated in the following Remarks.

The ſtudy of human nature has been often and variously recommended. “Know thyſelf,” was a precept ſo highly eſteemed by the venerable ſages of antiquity, that they aſcribed it to the Delphian oracle *.

* Cic. de Legibus.

By reducing it to practice, we learn the dignity of human nature: our emulation is excited by contemplating our divine original: and, by discovering the capacity and extent of our faculties, we become desirous of higher improvement. Nor would the practice of this apophthegm enable us merely to elevate and enlarge our desires, but also to purify and refine them; to withstand the sollicitations of groveling appetites, and subdue their violence: for improvement in virtue consists in duly regulating our inferior appetites, no less than in cultivating the principles of benevolence and magnanimity. Numerous, however, are the desires, and various are the passions that agitate the human heart. Every individual is actuated by feelings peculiar to himself, insensible even of their existence; of their precise force and tendency, often ignorant. But, to prevent the inroads of vice, and preserve
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our minds free from the tyranny of lawless passions, vigilance must be exerted where we are weakest and most exposed. We must therefore be attentive to the state and constitution of our own minds; we must discover to what habits we are most addicted, and of what propensities we ought chiefly to beware: we must deliberate with ourselves on what resources we can most assuredly depend, and what motives are best calculated to repel the invader. Now, the study of human nature, accustoming us to turn our attention inwards, and reflect on the various propensities and inclinations of the heart, facilitates self-examination, and renders it habitual.

Independent of utility, the study of the human mind is recommended in a peculiar manner to the curious and inquisitive; and is capable of yielding delight by the novelty, beauty, and magnificence, of the
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object. Many find amusement in searching into the constitution of the material world ; and, with unwearied diligence, pursue the progress of nature in the growth of a plant, or the formation of an insect. They spare neither labour nor expense, to fill their cabinets with every curious production: they travel from climate to climate: they submit with cheerfulness to fatigue, and inclement seasons; and think their industry sufficiently compensated, by the discovery of some unusual phenomenon. Not a pebble that lies on the shore, not a leaf that waves in the forest, but attracts their notice, and stimulates their inquiry. Events, or incidents, that the vulgar regard with terror or indifference, afford them supreme delight: they rejoice at the return of a comet, and celebrate the blooming of an aloe, more than the birth of an emperor. Nothing is left unexplored: air, ocean,
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the minutest objects of sense, as well as the greatest and most remote, are accurately and attentively scrutinized. But, though these researches are laudable, and are suited to the dignity and capacity of the human mind, we ought to remember, that Mind itself deserves our attention. Endowed with the superior powers of feeling and understanding, capable of thought and reflection, active, conscious, susceptible of delight, and provident of futurity, it claims to itself a duration, when the most splendid objects around us shall be destroyed. Observe the vigilance of the senses in collecting ideas from every part of the creation: memory preserves them as the materials of thought, and the principles of knowledge; our reasoning faculty separates, combines, or compares them, in order to discover their relations and consequences; and imagination, sedulous to amuse, arranges them into various groups

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and assemblages. If we consider the passions and feelings of the heart ; if we reflect on their diversity, and contemplate the various aspects they assume, the violence of some will terrify and astonish, the fantastic extravagance of many will excite amazement ; and others, soft and complacent, will sooth us, and yield delight. Shall we assert, therefore, that the study of human nature is barren or unpleasant ? or that Mind, thus actuated and informed, is less worthy of our notice than the insect produced at noon-tide, to finish its existence with the setting sun ? “ Shall a man,” says Socrates, “ be skilled in the geography of foreign countries, and continue ignorant of the soil and limits of his own ? Shall he inquire into the qualities of external objects, and pay no attention to the mind ? ”

But, though the utility or pleasure resulting from the study of human nature
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are manifest, the progress men have hitherto made in it neither corresponds with the dignity of the subject, nor with our advances in other branches of science. Neither is our knowledge of the passions and faculties of the mind proportioned to the numerous theories men have fabricated concerning them. On the contrary, the numerous theories of human nature which have appeared in various ages and languages, have been so different from one another, and withal so plausible and imposing, that instead of informing, they perplex. From this uncertainty and diversity of opinion, some have asserted that the mind of man, on account of its transcendent excellence, and the inconceivable delicacy of its structure, can never be the object of precise inquiry. Others, again, from very different premises, deduce the same conclusion, forming their opinions on the numerous, and apparently discordant, powers

powers and affections of the mind, and affirming, that its operations are governed by no regular principles.

That a perfect knowledge of the nature and faculties of the mind is not to be acquired in our present condition, cannot possibly be denied. Neither can the contrary be affirmed of any subject of philosophical inquiry. Yet our internal feelings, our observation and experience, supply us with rich materials, sufficient to animate our love of knowledge; and, by enabling us to prosecute our researches, to extend the limits of human understanding. Neither can we affirm, that our thoughts, feelings, and affections, are in a state of anarchy and confusion. Nothing, you say, seems wilder and more incoherent, than the images and ideas continually fluctuating in the mind: like the "gay motes that people the sunbeams," they know no order, and are
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guided by no connection. We are conscious of no power that regulates their motions, restrains their impetuosity, or composeth their disorder. No less irregular and disagreeing are the feelings and emotions of the heart. We are alike accessible to love or hatred, confidence or suspicion, exultation or despondency. These passions and dispositions are often blended together, or succeed each other, with a velocity which we can neither measure nor conceive. The soul that now melts with tenderness, is instantly frantic with rage. The countenance now adorned with complacency, and beauteous with the smile of content, is in a moment clouded with anxiety, or distorted with envy. He must therefore be more than mortal who can reduce this tumultuous and disorderly chaos to regularity.—
“Lift up thine eyes to the firmament,”
said a countryman to a philosopher, “number
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ber the stars, compute their distances, and explain their motions. Observe the diversity of seasons, and the confusion occasioned by the changeableness of the weather: the sun and refreshing showers cherish the fruits of the earth; but our fields are often blighted with mildews, the sky is suddenly overcast, the storms descend, and the hopes of the year are blasted. Prescribe laws to the winds, and govern the rage of the tempests; then will I believe, that the course of nature is regular and determined." Thus, even external phenomena, to an uninstructed person, will seem as wild and incongruous as the motions and affections of the mind. On a more accurate inspection, he finds that harmony and design pervade the universe; that the motions of the stars are regular; and that laws are prescribed to the tempest. Nature extends her attention to the most insignificant productions: the principles

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principles of vegetation are established immutable in the texture of the meanest blossom; the laws of its existence are accurately defined; and the period of its duration invariably determined. If these observations are just, and if we still maintain that the mind is in a state of anarchy and disorder, we are reduced to the necessity of affirming, that nature hath exhausted her powers in the formation of inferior objects, and neglected the most important; that she hath established laws and government in the inanimate creation, and abandoned the mind to misrule; and that she hath given us a body suited to our condition, fashioned according to the most accurate proportions, and adjusted to the nicest rules of mechanics, and left the animating principle, the mover and director of this wonderful machine, to be actuated by random impulses, mishapen, and imperfect. Shall we acquiesce in this opinion,

nion, and ascribe negligence or inability to the Creator? The laws that regulate the intellectual system are too fine for superficial attention, and elude the perception of the vulgar. But every accurate and sedate observer is sensible of their existence.

Difficulty in making just experiments is the principal reason why the knowledge of human nature has been retarded. The materials of this study are commonly gathered from reflections on our own feelings, or from observations on the conduct of others. Each of these methods is exposed to difficulty, and consequently to error.

Natural philosophers possess great advantages over moralists and metaphysicians, in so far as the subjects of their inquiries belong to the senses, are external, material, and often permanent. Hence they can retain them in their presence till they have examined their motion, parts,
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or composition: they can have recourse to them for a renewal of their ideas when they grow languid or obscure, or when they feel their minds vigorous, and disposed to philosophize. But passions are excited independent of our volition, and arise or subside without our desire or concurrence. Compassion is never awakened but by the view of pain or of sorrow. Resentment is never kindled but by actual suffering, or by the view of injustice. Will, anger, jealousy, and revenge, attend the summons of the dispassionate sage, that he may examine their conduct, and dismiss them? will pride and ambition obey the voice of the humble hermit, and assist him in explaining the principles of human nature? or by what powerful spell can the abstracted philosopher, whose passions are all chastened and subdued, whose heart never throbs with desire, prevail on the amorous affections to visit the
ungenial

ungenial clime of his breast, and submit their features to the rigour of his unrelenting scrutiny? The philosopher, accustomed to moderate his passions, rather than indulge them, is of all men least able to provoke their violence; and, in order to succeed in his researches, he must recal the idea of feelings perceived at some former period; or he must seize their impression, and mark their operations at the very moment they are accidentally excited. Thus, with other obvious disadvantages, he will often lose the opportunity of a happy mood, unable to avail himself of those animating returns of vivacity and attention essential to genius, but independent of the will.

Observations made while the mind is inflamed are difficult in the execution, incomplete, and erroneous. Eager passions admit no partners, and endure no rivals in their authority. The moment
—reflection,

reflection, or any foreign or opposing principle, begins to operate, they are either exceedingly exasperated, agitating the mind, and leaving it no leisure for speculation; or, if they are unable to maintain their ascendant, they become cool and indistinct; their aspect grows dim; and observations made during their decline, are imperfect. The passions are swift and evanescent: we cannot arrest their celerity, nor suspend them in the mind during pleasure. You are moved by strong affection: seize the opportunity, let none of its motions escape you, and observe every sentiment it excites. You cannot. While the passion prevails, you have no leisure for speculation; and be assured it hath suffered abatement, if you have time to philosophize.

But you proceed by recollection. Still, however, your observations are limited, and your theory partial. To be acquainted

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with the nature of any passion, we must know by what combination of feelings it is excited; to what temperament it is allied; in what proportion it gathers force and swiftness; what propensities, and what associations of ideas either retard or accelerate its impetuosity; and how it may be opposed, weakened, or suppressed. But, if these circumstances escape the most vigilant and abstracted attention, when the mind is actually agitated, how can they be recollected when the passion is entirely quieted? Moreover, every passion is compounded of inferior and subordinate feelings, essential to its existence, in their own nature nicely and minutely varied, but whose different shades and gradations are difficult to be discerned. To these we must be acutely attentive; to mark how they are combined, blended, or opposed; how they are suddenly extinguished, in a moment renewed, and again extinguished.

tinguished. But these fleet volatile feelings, perceived only when the mind is affected, elude the most dexterous and active memory. Add to this, that an idea of memory is ever fainter and less distinct than an actual perception, especially if the idea to be renewed is of a spiritual nature, a thought, sentiment, or internal sensation.

Even allowing the possibility of accurate observation, our theories will continue partial and inadequate *. We have only one view of the subject, and know not what aspects it may assume, or what powers it may possess in the constitution of another. No principle hath been more variously treated, nor hath given rise to a greater number of systems, than that by which we are denominated moral agents, and determine the merit or deme-

* Dr. Reid's Inquiry, chap. I. sect. 2.

rit of human actions. But this can proceed from no other cause than the diversity of our feelings, and the necessity we are under of measuring the dispositions of others by our own. Even this moral principle, though a competent judge of the virtue and propriety of human actions, is apt to mislead us in our inquiries concerning the structure and dispositions of the mind. Desirous of avoiding the rebuke of this severe and vigilant censor, we are ready to extenuate every blameable quality, and magnify what we approve.

In order, therefore, to rectify our opinions, and enlarge our conceptions of the human mind, we must study its operations in the conduct and deportment of others: we must mingle in society, and observe the manners and characters of mankind, according as casual or unexpected incidents may furnish an opportunity. But the mind, not being an object of the external senses,

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senses, the temper and inclinations of others can only be known to us by signs either natural or artificial, referring us to our own internal sensations. Thus, we are exposed nearly to the same difficulties as before: we cannot at pleasure call forth the objects of our researches, nor retain them till we have examined their nature: we can know no more of the internal feelings of another than he expresses by outward signs or language; and consequently he may feel many emotions that we are unable easily to conceive. Neither can we consider human characters and affections as altogether indifferent to us: they are not mere objects of curiosity; they excite love or hatred, approbation or dislike. But, when the mind is influenced by these affections, and by others that often attend them, the judgment is apt to be biased, and the force of the principle we contemplate is increased or di-

minished accordingly. The inquirer must not only beware of external difficulties, but must preserve his heart both from angry, and from kind affection. The maxim, that all men who deliberate about doubtful matters, should divest themselves of hatred, friendship, anger, and compassion, is as applicable in philosophy as in politics.

Since experiments, made by reflecting on our own minds, or by attending to the conduct of others, are liable to difficulty, and consequently to error; we should embrace every assistance that may facilitate and improve them. Were it possible, during the continuance of a violent passion, to seize a faithful impression of its features and an exact delineation of the images it creates in us, such a valuable copy would guide the philosopher in tracing the perplexed and intricate mazes of metaphysical inquiry. By frequently examining
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it, every partial consideration, and every feeling tending to mislead his opinions, would be corrected: his conception would be enlarged by discovering passions more or less vehement than his own, or by discovering tempers of a different colour. We judge of mankind by referring their actions to the passions and principles that influence our own behaviour: we have no other guide, since the nature of the passions and faculties of the mind are not discernible by the senses. It may, however, be objected, that, according to this hypothesis, those who deduce the conduct of others from malignant passions, and those who are capable of imitating them, must themselves be malignant. The observation is inaccurate. Every man, unless his constitution be defective, inherits the principles of every passion: but no man is the prey of all the passions. Some of them are so feeble in themselves, or ra-

ther, so entirely suppressed by the ascendant of others, that they never become principles of action, nor constitute any part of the character. Hence it is the business of culture and education, by giving exercise to virtuous principles, and by rendering them habitual, to bear down their opponents, and so gradually to weaken and wear them out. If we measure the minds of others precisely by our own, as we have formed and fashioned them by habit and education, and make no account of feeble and decaying principles, our theories must necessarily be inadequate: but, by considering the copy and portrait of minds different from our own, and by reflecting on these latent and unexerted principles, augmented and promoted by imagination, we may discover many new tints, and uncommon features. Now, that class of poetical writers that excel by imitating the passions, might contribute

contribute in this respect to rectify and enlarge the sentiments of the philosopher: And, if so, they would have the additional merit of conducting us to the temple of truth, by an easier and more agreeable path than that of mere metaphysics.

We often confound the writer who imitates the passions with him who only describes them. Shakespeare imitates, Corneille describes. Poets of the second class, no less than those of the first, may invent the most elegant fictions, may paint the most beautiful imagery, may exhibit situations exceedingly interesting, and conduct their incidents with propriety: their versification may be harmonious; and, above all, their characters may be judiciously composed, partaking of no incongruous qualities, and free from the discord of jarring principles. But the end of dramatic poetry not only requires that the characters be judiciously moulded and aptly
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circumstanced, but that every passion be naturally expressed. There is certainly a wide difference between the description of the fallies, the repulses, and impatience of a violent affection, whether they are described by the agent or the spectator, and their actual imitation and expression. But perfect imitation can never be effectuated, unless the poet in some measure becomes the person he represents, clothes himself with his character, assumes his manners, and transposeth himself into his situation: the texture of his mind must be exquisitely fine and delicate; susceptible of every feeling, and easily moved by every impression. Together with this delicacy of affection, he must possess a peculiar warmth and facility of imagination, by which he may retire from himself, become insensible of his actual condition, and regardless of external circumstances, feel the very incidents he invents: like the votaries
of

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of a pagan religion, he must worship idols, the works of his own hands, and tremble before the demons of his own creation. Nothing affords a stronger evidence of the active, versatile nature of the soul, and of the amazing rapidity of its motions, than these seemingly inconceivable and inconsistent exertions.

Shakespeare, inventing the characters of Hamlet, Macbeth or Othello, actually felt the passions, and contending emotions ascribed to them. Compare a soliloquy of Hamlet, with one of the descriptions of Roderigue in the Cid. Nothing can be more natural in the circumstances and with the temper of Hamlet, than the following reflections.

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

Fie

Fie on't! O fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden,
 That grows to feed; things rank, and grofs in nature,
 Poffefs it merely.---That it fhould come to this!
 But two months dead! nay, not fo much; not two!
 So excellent a king, that was, to this,
 Hyperion to a fatyr: fo loving to my mother,
 That he might not let e'en the winds of heaven
 Vifit her face too roughly.---Heaven and earth!
 Muft I remember? Why, fhe would hang on him,
 As if increafe of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on: and yet, within a month---
 Let me not think on't---Frailty, thy name is Woman!
 A little month; or ere thofe fhoes were old,
 With which fhe follow'd my poor father's body,
 Like Niobe, all tears,---Why fhe, even fhe---
 O Heaven! a beaft that wants difcourfe of reafon,
 Wou'd have mourn'd longer---married with my uncle,
 My father's brother; but no more like my father
 Than I to Hercules. Within a month---
 Ere yet the falt of moft unrighteous tears
 Had left the flufhing in her gauled eyes--
 She married.---Oh, moft wicked fpeed, to poft
 With fuch dexterity to inceftuous fheets!
 It is not, nor it cannot come to good.

In the Cid, Roderigue, who is the hero
 of the tragedy, and deeply enamoured of
 Chimene,

Chimene, is called upon to revenge a heinous insult done to his father by the father of his mistress; and he delineates the distress of his situation, in the following manner; certainly with great beauty of expression and versification, and with peculiar elegance of description, but not as a real sufferer.

Percé jusqu'au fond du cœur
D'une atteinte imprevue aussi bien que mortelle;
Miserable vengeur d'une trop juste querelle,
Et malheureux objet d'une injuste rigueur,
Je demeure immobile, et mon ame abattue
Cede au coup qui me tue.

This harangue would better suit a descriptive novelist or narrator of the story, than the person actually concerned. Let us make the experiment. Let us change the verbs and pronouns from the first person into the third; and, instead of supposing that Roderigue speaks, let us imagine that the state of his mind is described by
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a spectator: "pierced even to the heart,
 "by an unforeseen as well as mortal stroke,
 "the miserable avenger of a just quarrel,
 "and the unhappy object of unjust severity, *he remains* motionless, and *his* brother spirit *yields* to the blow that destroys
 "him."

*Il demeure immobile, et son ame abattue
 Cede au coup qui le tue.*

Try the soliloquy of Hamlet by the same test; and, without inserting the words "he said," which render it dramatic, the change will be impossible. Try also the following lines from Virgil: they are taken from that celebrated and well-known passage, where Dido expresses to Anna the passion she had conceived for Æneas.

*Quis novus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes?
 Quem sese ore ferens! quam forti pectore et armis!
 Credo equidem, nec vana fides, genus esse decorum, &c.*

It may be observed in general, that,
 whenever a speech seems proper and intelligible

ligible with the change of persons above mentioned, and without inserting some such words as, "he said," or, "he replied," it is narration, it is description; but can scarcely be called the language of passion. I am aware, that some passages, even in Shakespeare, may be opposed to this observation. When Macbeth returns from the assassination of Duncan, Lady Macbeth tells him to carry back the daggers, and smear with blood the faces of the King's attendants, meaning to fasten upon them the suspicion of the murder. Macbeth replies,

I'll go no more !---

I am afraid to think what I have done;

Look on't again, I dare not.

Is this the direct and natural expression of fear? If so, it bears hard against the foregoing remark. But let us reflect attentively. Fear is not the present passion in the mind of Macbeth: a transient desire of another kind

kind for a moment engages him, namely, the desire of giving Lady Macbeth a reason for not returning into the King's apartment. The man who tells you, "I am exceedingly angry, or exceedingly in love, and therefore I act in such or such a manner," does not in these words speak the language either of love or of anger, but of his desire of giving you a reason, or of his making an apology for his behaviour. You believe him, because you trust in his veracity, and because you see corresponding evidence in his deportment; not that the words, "I am angry," or "I am in love," independent of tones of voice, looks or gestures, express either love or anger.

An objection of the following kind may also be advanced: "The excellence of dramatic writing consists in its imitating with truth and propriety the manners and passions of mankind: if therefore a dramatic

matic writer, capable of describing and of narrating with elegance and propriety, is nevertheless incapable of expressing the language and sentiments of passion, he fails in the sole end and purpose of his art, and of consequence can afford no pleasure. Contrary to this, many tragedies are seen and read with uncommon applause, and excite even the liveliest feelings; but which, if they were tried by the abovementioned standard, would be reckoned defective." To remove this objection, it may be observed, that those sympathetic emotions that interest us in the happiness and misery of others, and yield us the highest pleasure at theatrical entertainments, are, by the wise and beneficial institutions of nature, exceedingly apt to be excited: so apt, that if any concomitant circumstances, though of a different kind, whether melancholy or joyful, draw the mind from its usual state of indifference, and dispose it to a state of ex-

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treme sensibility; the slightest incident or expression will call forth our sympathy. Now, in dramatic performances, there are many things to put the mind into a susceptible and tender mood, and chiefly, elegance of expression, harmony of composition, and delightful imagery. These working upon the mind, and being all concerned to impress us with the notion of certain events or circumstances, very interesting to persons of certain qualities and dispositions, our imaginations are immediately stimulated and in action; we figure to ourselves the characters which the poet intends to exhibit; we take part in their interests, and enter into their passions as warmly as if they were naturally expressed. Thus it appears, that it is often with beings of our own formation that we lament or rejoice, imagining them to be the workmanship of another. And indeed this delusion will ever prevail with people of warm imaginations, if what the poet invents

vents be tolerable, or not worse than insipid. We may also observe, that we are much more subject to delusions of this kind when dramatic performances are exhibited on the stage, and have their effect supported by the scenery, by the dresses of the players, and by their action.

If this remark, that our own imaginations contribute highly to the pleasure we receive from works of invention, be well founded, it will explain the reason why men of accurate discernment, and of understandings sufficiently polished, often differ widely from one another, and, at times, widely from themselves, in their opinions concerning works of taste. The imagination is a faculty of a nature so versatile and so variable, that at one time it is animated and fruitful of images; at other times, it is cold, barren and languishing. At a fruitful moment, it will embellish the dullest performance with the most brilliant ornaments: it will im-

pose them on you as genuine, and so entice you to bestow applause. At other times, it will be niggardly, even of the assistance that is necessary. Hence, too, the reason why critics of active imaginations are generally disposed to favour. Read a performance, even of slight and superficial merit, to a person of a lively fancy, and he will probably applaud. Some ideas strike him : they gather a group of images in his own mind ; they please him, and he perceives not, in the ardour of the operation, that the picture is his own, and not that of the writer. He examines it coolly : the phantom that pleased him vanishes : he is ashamed of the delight it yielded him, and of the praises he so freely bestowed. It follows also, on the same principle, that men of lively imaginations receive more exquisite pleasure from works of fancy, than those whose inventive faculties are not so vigorous. Upon the whole, it is manifest, that a great 'portion
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tion of the delight we receive from poetry and fine writing, depends no less on the state of our own minds, than on the intrinsic excellence of the performance. It is also obvious, that, though the description of a passion or affection may give us pleasure, whether it be described by the agent or the spectator, yet, to those who would apply the inventions of the poet to the uses of philosophical investigation, it is far from being of equal utility with the passion exactly imitated. The talent of imitation is very different from that of description, and far superior*.

No writer has hitherto appeared who possesses in a more eminent degree than Shakespeare, the power of imitating the passions. All of them seem familiar to

* The author of the Elements of Criticism is, if I mistake not, the first writer who has taken any notice of this important distinction between the imitation and description of a passion.

him; the boisterous no less than the gentle; the benign no less than the malignant. There are several writers, as there are many players, who are successful in imitating some particular passions, but who appear stiff, awkward, and unnatural, in the expression of others. Some are capable of exhibiting very striking representations of resolute and intrepid natures, but cannot so easily bend themselves to those that are softer and more complacent. Others, again, seem full of amiable affection and tenderness, but cannot exalt themselves to the boldness of the hero, or magnanimity of the patriot. The genius of Shakespeare is unlimited. Possessing extreme sensibility, and uncommonly susceptible, he is the Proteus of the Drama: he changes himself into every character, and enters easily into every condition of human nature.

O youths and virgins! O declining eld!
O pale misfortune's slaves! O ye who dwell

Unknown

Unknown with humble quiet! Ye who wait
 In courts, and fill the golden seat of kings :
 O sons of sport and pleasure! O thou wretch
 That weep'st for jealous love, and the fore wound
 Of conscious guilt, or death's rapacious hand
 That left thee void of hope! O ye who mourn
 In exile! Ye who through th'embattled field
 Seek bright renown; or who for nobler palms
 Contend, the leaders of a public cause!
 Hath not his faithful tongue
 Told you the fashion of your own estate,
 The secrets of your bosom * ?

Many dramatic writers of different ages are capable, occasionally, of breaking out, with great fervour of genius, in the natural language of strong emotion. No writer of antiquity is more distinguished for abilities of this kind than Euripides. His whole heart and soul seem torn and agitated by the force of the passion he imitates. He ceases to be Euripides; he is Medea; he is Orestes. Shakespeare, however, is most eminently distinguished, not only by these occasional sallies, but by

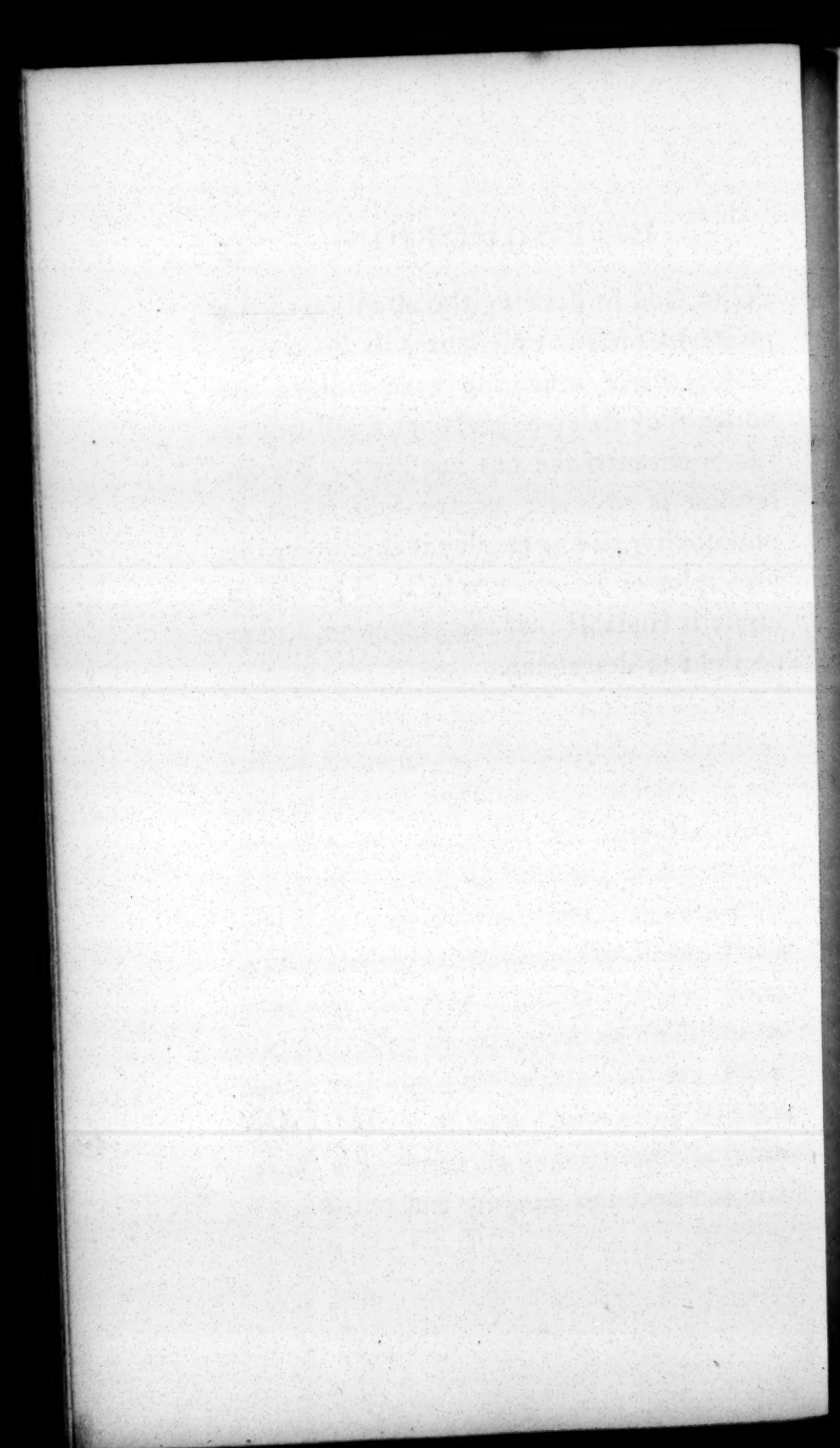
* Akenfide, -

imitating the passion in all its aspects, by pursuing it through all its windings and labyrinths, by moderating or accelerating its impetuosity according to the influence of other principles and of external events, and finally by combining it in a judicious manner with other passions and propensities, or by setting it aptly in opposition. He thus unites the two essential powers of dramatic invention, that of forming characters; and that of imitating, in their natural expressions, the passions and affections of which they are composed. It is, therefore, my intention to examine some of his remarkable characters, and to analyze their component parts: an exercise no less adapted to improve the heart, than to inform the understanding. It is obvious that my design by no means coincides with that of the ingenious author of the *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspeare*, whose success in rescuing the fame of our poet from the attacks of partial criticism,

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ticism, and in drawing the attention of the public to various excellences in his works, which might otherwise have escaped the notice they deserve, gives her a just title to the reputation she has acquired. My intention is to make poetry subservient to philosophy, and to employ it in tracing the principles of human conduct. The design surely is laudable : of the execution, I have no right to determine.

SECTION



SECTION I.

ON THE

CHARACTER OF MACBETH.

THE human mind, in different situations and circumstances, undergoes many extraordinary changes, and assumes a variety of different aspects. Men of gaiety and cheerfulness become reserved and unsocial: the beneficent temper, losing its agreeable sweetness, becomes morose: the indolent man leaves his retirement: the man of business becomes inactive: and men of gentle and kind affections acquire habits of cruelty and revenge. As these changes affect the temper, and not the faculties

culties of the mind, they are produced by irregular and outrageous passions. In order, therefore, to explain any unusual alteration of temper or character, we must consider the nature of the ruling passion, and observe its tendency.

In the character of Macbeth, we have an instance of a very extraordinary change. In the following passages we discover the complexion and bias of his mind in its natural and unperverted state.

Brave Macbeth, (well he deserves that name,)
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smok'd with bloody execution,
Like Valour's minion, carved out his passage.

The particular features of his character are more accurately delineated by Lady Macbeth.

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor ;—and shalt be
What thou art promis'd—Yet do I fear thy nature ;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness,
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great ;
Art not without ambition ; but without
The illness should attend it.

He

He is exhibited to us valiant, dutiful to his sovereign, mild, gentle, and ambitious: but ambitious without guilt. Soon after, we find him false, perfidious, barbarous, and vindictive. All the principles in his constitution seem to have undergone a violent and total change. Some appear to be altogether reduced or extirpated; others monstrously overgrown. Ferocity is substituted instead of mildness, treasonable intentions instead of a sense of duty. His ambition, however, has suffered no diminution: on the contrary, by having become exceedingly powerful, and by rising to undue pretensions, it seems to have vanquished and suppressed every amiable and virtuous principle. But, in a conflict so important, and where the opposing powers were naturally vigorous, and invested with high authority, violent must have been the struggle, and obstinate the resistance. Nor could the prevailing passion have been enabled to contend

tend with virtue, without having gained, at some former period, an unlawful ascendancy. Therefore, in treating the history of this revolution, we shall consider how the usurping principle became so powerful ; how its powers were exerted in its conflict with opposing principles ; and what were the consequences of its victory.

I. The growth of Macbeth's ambition was so imperceptible, and his treason so unexpected, that the historians of an ignorant age, little accustomed to explain uncommon events by simple causes, and strongly addicted to a superstitious belief in sorcery, ascribed them to preternatural agency. And Shakespeare, capable of exalting this fiction, and of rendering it interesting, by his power over the "terrible graces," hath adopted it in its full extent. In this part, therefore, having little assistance from the poet, we shall hazard a conjecture, supported by some facts and observations,

observations, concerning the power of fancy, aided by partial gratification, to invigorate and inflame our passions.

All men, who possess the seeds of violent passions, will often be conscious of their influence, before they have opportunities of indulging them. By nature provident, and prone to reflection, we look forward with eagerness into futurity, and anticipate our enjoyments. Never completely satisfied with our present condition, we embrace in imagination the happiness that is to come. But happiness is relative to constitution: it depends on the gratification of our desires: and the happiness of mankind is various; because the desires of the heart are various. The nature, therefore, of anticipated enjoyment is agreeable to the nature of our desires. Men of indolent dispositions, and addicted to pleasure, indulge themselves in dreams of festivity. Those, again, who have in their constitution, the latent principles

principles of avarice, administer to the gratification of their fatal propensity, by reveries of ideal opulence. Dignity, parade, and magnificence, are ever present to the ambitious man: laurels, if he pursues literary fame: battles and conquest, if his humour is warlike. Whoever would cultivate an acquaintance with himself, and would know to what passions he is most exposed, should attend to the operations of fancy, and by remarking the objects she with greatest pleasure exhibits, he may discern with tolerable accuracy, the nature of his own mind, and the principles most likely to rule him. Excursions of the imagination, except in minds idly extravagant, are commonly governed by the probability of success. They are also regulated by moral considerations *: for no man indulging visions of ideal felicity, imbrues his hands

* See Hutcheson on the origin of our ideas of beauty and harmony.

in the blood of the guiltless, or suffers himself in imagination to be unjust or perfidious. Yet, by this imaginary indulgence, harmless as it may appear, our passions become immoderate. This is manifest from the following observations.

When the mind is agitated by violent passions, the thoughts presented to us are of a corresponding character. The angry man thinks of injury, perfidy, or insult. Under the influences of fear, we figure to ourselves dangers that have no reality, and tremble without a cause.

Vitas hinnuleo me similis, Chloë,
 Quærenti pavidam montibus aviis
 Matrem, non sine vano
 Aurarum, et silvæ metu.
 Nam seu mobilibus vitis inhorruit
 Ad ventum foliis, seu virides rubum
 Dimovere lacertæ,
 Et corde et genibus tremit. HOR.

Minds, differently fashioned, and under the influence of different passions, receive

D

from

from the same objects dissimilar impressions. Exhibit the same beautiful valley to the miser and to the poet. Elegant and lovely images arise in the poet's mind: Dryads preside in the groves, and Naiads in the fountains. Notions of wealth seize the heart of the miser: he computes the profits of the meadows and corn-fields, and envies the possessor. The mind, dwelling with pleasure on these images which coincide with its present humour, or agree with the present passion, embellishes and improves them. The poet, by figuring additional lawns and mountains, renders the landscape more beautiful, or more sublime: but the miser, moved by no compassion for Wood-nymphs or Naiads, lays waste the forest, changes the windings of the river into a dead canal, and purchaseth wealth at the expense of beauty. Now, as the influences of passion govern and arrange our ideas, these, in return, nourish and promote

mote the passion. If any object appears to us more striking and excellent than usual, it communicates a stronger impulse, and excites a keener and more vehement desire. When the lover discovers, or fancies he discovers, new charms in the character of his mistress, if her complexion glows with a softer blush, if her manner and attitude seem more engaging, his love waxes ardent, and his ardour ungovernable. Thus imaginary representations, more even than real objects, stimulate our desires, and our passions, administering fuel to themselves, are immoderately inflamed. Joy is in this manner enlivened; anger more keenly exasperated; envy burns with additional malice; and melancholy, brooding over her ideas of misery and disappointment, is tortured with anguish, and plunges into despair.

Thus far ambition may be invigorated, assisted merely by a lively temperament, and a glowing imagination. Prompted by

D.2

its

its incitements, we engage with eagerness in the career of glory; and, with persevering courage, undergo fatigue and encounter danger. But, though imagination may dazzle and inflame, the prudent man, in the pursuit of honours, limits his desires to objects within his reach. The most active spirit, confined to a narrow sphere, is never desirous of unattainable glory, but is ambitious of being distinguished in his condition. If, however, by succeeding in inferior enterprises, higher objects are exhibited to us, our ambition, by partial gratification, becomes more violent than before. In producing this effect, the following causes co-operate.

The temporary and accidental emotion of joy, occasioned by success, enlivens and animates the passion upon which it depends. You love your friend; he returns unexpectedly from a long journey; your joy on his arrival heightens your affection, and you receive him with transport.

Non ego fanius
 Bacchabor Edonis : recepto
 Dulce mihi furere est amico. HOR.

The new object appearing more excellent than the former, excites a livelier appetite. To the churchman, who was meek and moderate in pursuit of inferior dignity, exhibit a mitre, and you spoil his peace.

The proximity of the object, because no intermediate ideas divert our attention, quickens and promotes the passion. The profligate heir, who longs for the death of an avaricious father, is more eagerly impatient during his last moments, than during the course of a tedious life. And the nearer the hour of assignation approaches, the heart of the lover throbs with a keener and more intense desire. To these illustrations the following passage from a celebrated historian *, is extremely apposite : “ James, harrassed with his
 “ turbulent and factious subjects, cast a

* Hume.

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“ wishful

“ wishful eye to the succession of Eng-
“ land ; and, in proportion as the queen
“ advanced in years, his desire increased
“ of mounting that throne.”

Success, as it produces vanity, invigorates our ambition. Eminently or unexpectedly distinguished, we fancy ourselves endowed with superior merit, and entitled to higher honour. Alexander, after the conquest of Persia, grew more vain and more extravagantly ambitious than before.

In this manner, by joy, by the prospect, and proximity of a more splendid object, and by vanity, all depending on partial gratification, the passion is swelled, and becomes excessive. Macbeth having repelled the inroads of the Islanders, and having vanquished a numerous host of Norwegians, is rewarded by his king, and revered by his countrymen. He rises to unexpected honours: his ambition, fostered by imagination, and confirmed by success, becomes immoderate; and his soul, elevated

vated above measure, aspires to sovereignty.

II. Every variation of character and passion, is accompanied with corresponding changes in the sentiments of the spectator. Macbeth, engaged in the defence of his country, and pursuing the objects of a laudable ambition, is justly honoured and esteemed. But the distraction which ensues from the conflict between vitious and virtuous principles, renders him the object of compassion mixed with disapprobation.

The chief obstacle in the way of our selfish desires, proceeds from the opposition of our moral faculties: Invested, by nature, with supreme authority to judge concerning the passions of mankind, they exert themselves in restraining their impetuosity and in preserving the harmony of the internal system. Accordingly, when the notion of seizing the crown is

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suggested.

suggested to Macbeth, he appears shocked and astonished. Justice and humanity shudder at the design: he regards his own heart with amazement; and recoils with horror from the guilty thought.

This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill; cannot be good. If ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature?

Though virtuous principles appear in this instance to predominate, his ambition is not repulsed. The means of gratifying it seem shocking and impracticable: and he abandons the enterprize, without renouncing the passion. The passion continues vehement; it perseveres with obstinacy: it harrasses and importunes him. He still desires; but, deterred by his moral feelings, he is unable to proceed directly, and indulges romantic wishes.

If

If chance will have me King, why, chance may
crown me,
Without my stir.

It appears from this and some following passages, that, in agony, and distracted with contending principles, hesitating and irresolute, anxious for the event, but fearful of promoting it, he had abandoned the design of murdering Duncan, and had formed some extravagant expectation of inheriting the crown by right of succession. Thus he recovers some portion of his tranquillity.

Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

He enjoys an interval of composure till an unexpected obstacle rouses and alarms him.

King. My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves
In drops of sorrow.—Sons, kinsmen, Thanes,
And you whose places are the nearest, know,
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm; whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland.

The

The surprise, and the uneasy sensation excited by the perception of difficulty, agitate the mind of Macbeth, and their emotions coinciding with his ambition, renew and increase its violence.

The Prince of Cumberland !—That is a step,
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
For in my way it lies.

But conscience and his humanity are again alarmed, again interfere, and shew him the horror of his designs.

Stars, hide your fires !
Let not light see my black and deep desires.

Habituated passions possess superior advantages over those opposite principles which operate by a violent and sudden impulse. For, so delicate is the constitution of the human mind, that lively feelings, unless they form the temper by being confirmed by action, are enfeebled by repetition and frequent exercise. The horror and aversion excited by enormous wickedness, unless

less we act in conformity to them, “* are
“mere passive impressions, which, by
“being repeated, grow weaker;” and
though their resistance against an habituated
passion be animated, it is of short duration.
They subside: they are overwhelmed;
but not extinguished. Macbeth, in the
following conference, appears reconciled
to the idea of treason: he can think of it
calmly, and without abhorrence: and all
the opposition he has henceforth to en-
counter, will arise, not from his feelings,
but from reflection.

Macb. My dearest love!

Duncan comes here to night.

Lady Macb. And when goes hence?

Macb. To-morrow, as he purposes.

Lady Macb. O, never

Shall sun that morrow see.

Macb. We shall speak further.

Inward contention of mind naturally pro-
vokes soliloquy. The reason of this ap-
pearance is obvious. In the beginning of

* Butler's Analogy, part I. chap. v.

life,

life, feeble and unable to assist ourselves, we depend entirely upon others; we are constantly in society; and, of course, if we are affected by any violent emotions, we are accustomed to utter them. Consequently, by force of association and habit, when they return excessive on any future occasion, impatient of restraint, they will not be arrested by reflection, but vent themselves as they were wont. We may observe, in confirmation of this remark, that children are often prone to soliloquy: and so are men of lively passions. In children, the association is vigorous and entire: in men of lively passions, habits are more tenacious than with men of a cooler temperament. When the contending principles are of equal energy, our emotions are uttered in broken and incoherent sentences, and the disordered state of our mind is expressed by interrupted gestures, absence of attention, and an agitated demeanour.

Banquo.

Banquo. Look how our partner's rapt.

Lady Macb. Your face, my Thane, is as a book,
where men

May read strange matters. To beguile the time;
Look like the time.

But, when the inward disorder proceeds from the violence of passion, unopposed by internal feelings, and thwarted only by external circumstances, anxious for success, doubtful concerning the means, delivered from opposing principles, and capable of reflecting, without abhorrence, on intended injury, our soliloquies, if we are disposed to them, are more coherent. Macbeth, reasoning anxiously concerning the consequences of his design, reflecting on the opinions of mankind, on the hatred and infamy he must incur, and on the repentment he must encounter, overcome by fear, relinquishes his undertaking.

If it were *done*, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly : if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease, success; that but this blow

Might

Might be the Be-all and the End-all *here*,
 But *here*: upon this bank and shoal of time :
 We'd jump the life to come.—But, in these cases,
 We still have judgment *here*; that we but teach
 Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
 To plague the inventor. This even-handed Justice
 Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
 To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
 First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
 Who should against his murth'rer shut the door,
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
 Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues
 Will plead, like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
 The deep damnation of his taking off :
 And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye ;
 That tears shall drown the wind.—
 We will proceed no further in this business:
 He hath honour'd me of late ; and I have bought
 Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
 Which should be worn now in their newest gloss,
 Not cast aside so soon.

Thus, the irregular passion is again
 repulsed: yet symptoms of the decay of
 virtue

virtue are manifest. Immediate instinctive aversion, in cases of censure, accompanies the decisions of our moral faculty: and those who are deterred from crimes, merely by the dread of punishment, and a regard to the opinions of mankind, betray a vitiated and depraved constitution *. The lively feelings, opposed to ambition, unable, by the vivacity of their first impression, to extirpate the habit, languish, and are enfeebled. The irregular passion, like the persevering Fabius, gathers strength by delay: the virtuous principle, like the gallant, but unsupported Hannibal, suffers diminution, even by success. Thus, it is manifest, that the contest between the obstinacy of an habituated passion, and the vehemence of an animated feeling, is unequal; and that there is infinite danger even in the apparently innocent and imaginary indulgence

* Tu nihil admittes in te formidine poenæ;

Sit spes fallendi, miscebis sacra profanis. HOR.

of a selfish passion. The harmony of the internal system is nicely adjusted ; and the excessive tension or relaxation of any of the parts, produces irregular and discordant tones.

The opinions of mankind are variable : for nations and communities, no less than individuals, are liable to prejudice. Particular emergencies and prepossessions, mislead the judgment ; and we applaud at one time, what we blame at another. A system of conduct, founded on the opinion of others, is, therefore, unstable, inconsistent, and often vitious. Macbeth, considering the assassination of Duncan as a deed deserving punishment, is deterred from his enterprise ; but, reflecting upon it as an event which he desired, but durst not accomplish, his courage is questioned, and his honour impeached. When the sense of honour is corrupted, virtue expires. Influenced by fatal prejudices, and, flattering himself with the hope of impunity,
he

he finally determines himself, and engages to execute the black design.

Lady Macb. Art thou afraid
To be the fame in thine own act and valour,
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that,
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem?
Letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would*?

Macb. Pr'ythee, peace:
I dare do all that may become a man.—
If we should fail!

Lady Macb. We fail!
But screw your courage to the sticking place,
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep, &c.

Macb. I'm fettle'd, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

In the natural and healthful state of the mind, all its operations are regular and correct. The external organs of the senses, corresponding with memory, present ideas to the understanding; and we regulate our actions according to the notices they communicate. But, when the mind is seized and occupied by violent passions, its operations are disturbed, and

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the notices we receive from the senses are disregarded. The soldier, in the field of battle, eager to signalize his valour, perceives not that he is wounded, till he falls. The priests of Cybele, actuated by wild enthusiasm, inflicted wounds on their own bodies, and seemed insensible of the pain. In like manner, the notices communicated to the soul of Macbeth, agitated and shaken by tumultuous passions, are wild, broken, and incoherent: and reason, beaming at intervals, heightens the horror of his disorder.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand ? Come, let me clutch
thee :—

I have thee not ; and yet I see the still.
Art thou not, fatal vision ! sensible
To feeling as to sight ? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind ? a false creation
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain ?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.—

'Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going ;
And such an instrument I was to use.

Mine

Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest :—I see thee still ;
And on thy blade and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
Which was not so before.—There's no such thing.

Let us review the conflict. Ambition grown habitual and inveterate in the soul of Macbeth, suggests the idea of assassination. The sense of virtue, compassion, and other kindred principles, are alarmed, and oppose. His ruling passion is repulsed, but not enfeebled. Resigning himself to the hope of profiting by some future emergency, he renounces the idea of violence. A difficulty appears: it renews, rouses, and inflames his ambition. The principles of virtue again oppose; but, by exercise and repetition, they are, for a time enfeebled. They excite no abhorrence; and he reflects, with composure, on his design. But, in reflecting, the apprehension of danger, and the fear of retribution alarm him. He abandons his purpose; is deemed irresolute: not less

innocent for not daring to execute what he dares to desire, he is charged with cowardice. Impatient of the charge, and indignant; harrassed by fear, by the consciousness of guilt, and by humanity struggling to resume her influence, he rushes headlong on his bane.

III. We come now to consider the effects produced in the mind of Macbeth, by the indulgence of the vicious passion. Invested with royalty, he has attained the summit of his desires. His ambition is completely gratified. Will he, therefore, enjoy repose? Unmolested by anxiety and fruitless wishes, will he enjoy the happiness of his condition, and the dignity he has so dearly purchased? Or will the principles of virtue that opposed his preferment, baffled, and put to shame, submit, without murmuring, to the yoke; and, unable to recal the past, acquiesce, and be silent?

All

All cases of internal conflict and commotion suppose vigorous and opposing principles. But principles inherent in our constitutions are seldom extirpated. Suppose them vanquished. The contending passion is gratified. A passion, when gratified, ceases to operate: it no longer exists; and the mind is left vacant. But passions or propensities, which have been suppressed by incompatible and more powerful principles, still remain in the mind; and when opposition is removed, they arise and resume their station. The profligate, hurried away by unruly appetites, plunges into every species of excess: and when his desires are sated, conscience, formerly active, but disregarded, overwhelms him with deep contrition. This state of mind continues, till the irregular appetites recover strength, solicit indulgence, and are obeyed. Regret follows: and his life is thus divided between the extravagance of illicit desire, and the

E 3 despondency

despondency of repentance. In Macbeth, the amiable and congenial sentiments of humanity and compassion, a sense of duty, and a regard to the opinions of mankind, contended with ambition: their efforts were ineffectual, but their principles were not extinguished. Formerly, they warned and entreated; but, when the deed is perpetrated, and no adversary is opposed to them, they return with violence; they accuse and condemn. Macbeth, alarmed by his feelings, now operating without controul, reflects with astonishment on his conduct; and his soul, darkened with horror, shudders and is confounded at the atrocity of his guilt. He feels himself the object of universal hatred and indignation. Religious sentiments, formerly weak and disregarded, are animated by his confusion; and, borrowing their complexion from his present temper, they terrify and overwhelm him. Amazed at the atrocity of his own proceedings,

ceedings, conscious of perfidy and injustice, and of the resentment they will excite; apprehensive, that both heaven and earth are stirred up against him, his fancy is haunted with tremendous images, and his soul distracted with remorse and terror.

I have done the deed:—did'st thou not hear a noise?
There's one did laugh in his sleep, and one cried,
Murder!

That they did wake each other: I stood and heard
them.—

One cried, *God bless us!* and, *Amen!* the other;
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands
Listening their fear. I could not say, Amen,
When they did say, God bless us.—

But wherefore could not I pronounce, Amen?
I had most need of blessing, and Amen
Stuck in my throat.—

Methought I heard a voice cry, *Sleep no more!*
Macbeth doth murder sleep.

Still it cry'd, *Sleep no more!* to all the house;
Glamis hath murder'd sleep; and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.

Macbeth, elevated with high and aspiring wishes, dazzled with the glare of

royalty, and instigated by keen ambition, cherisheth opinions bordering on impiety; and, thoughts of retribution in a future state of existence seeming to affect him slightly, he would "jump the life to come." But, having perpetrated the bloody deed, every noise appals him; and, when others prefer their orisons to heaven, he cannot say Amen.

If impelled by irregular and headstrong passions, we not only transgress the limits of rectitude, but are guilty of heinous acts of oppression and violence, reflecting on the sentiments of mankind, and measuring them by our own, we imagine ourselves no less abhorred by the spectator, than by the sufferer. Conscious of our crimes, and apprehensive of the resentment and indignation they have necessarily excited, we dread the punishment they deserve, and endeavour to avoid it. By suspicion and distrust, the necessary offspring of treachery, the
soul

foul is for ever tormented. Perfidious ourselves, we repose no confidence in mankind, and are incapable of friendship. We are particularly fearful of all those to whom eminent virtue and integrity have given a strong sense of injustice, and to whom wisdom and intrepidity have given power to punish. Prompted by our fears, we hate every amiable and exalted character, we wage war with the virtuous, and endeavour, by their destruction, to prevent our own. So tyrannical is the dominion of vice, that it compels us to hate what nature, having ordained for our benefit, has rendered lovely, and recommended to our esteem.

To be thus, is nothing,
But to be safely thus :—Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep ; and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that, which would be fear'd. 'Tis much he
dares,

And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour

To

To act in safety. There is none but he,
Whose being I do fear : and under him
My genius is rebuk'd.

Whoever possesses high ideas of the rights of mankind, of the sanctity of friendship, and of the duty we owe to legal authority ; whoever with these possesses a heart susceptible of tenderness and of compassion, will have a higher sense of injury and injustice, than men of colder complexions, and less strongly impressed with the importance of social duties. Therefore, if a man of uncommon sensibility, adorned with amiable and beneficent dispositions, misled by some pernicious appetite, commits acts of cruelty and oppression, he will be more apt, by reflecting on his own conduct, to conceive the resentment and indignation it excites, than men of a different temper. Reflecting on the compassion and resentment that would have arisen in his own mind, on the view of crimes similar to those

those he has himself perpetrated, he becomes afraid of the punishment he would himself have inflicted. Thus, instigated by his fears, and, imagining himself universally hated, he conceives a sentiment of universal hatred: and, as his fears are exactly proportioned to his feelings and sensibility, so are his hatred and malevolence. In like manner, a man of no sensibility, of little beneficence, and possessing no high idea of social obligation, carried by his avarice or his ambition to commit acts of injustice, and having no lively conceptions, from his own feelings, of the resentment he has excited, will, consequently, be less afraid of mankind, and of course, less violent in his hatred. It follows, that, in the circumstances of having procured undue possessions by inhuman means, and of desiring to preserve them, men of innate sensibility will be more cruel and sanguinary than men naturally severe, rugged, and insensible.

May

May not these observations unravel a seeming difficulty in the histories of Sylla and Augustus, of Nero, and of Herod? Sylla and Augustus, naturally severe, having attained the summit of their desires, had no imaginary apprehensions of punishment, and ended their days in peace. Nero and Herod, naturally of soft and amiable dispositions, betrayed by unruly passions, committed acts of cruelty, were conscious of their crimes, dreaded the resentment they deserved, and, in order to avoid it, became infamous and inhuman. By considering Sylla and Augustus in this light, some extraordinary circumstances in their conduct, much celebrated by some modern writers, namely, the resignation of the dictatorship by the one, and the apparent clemency of the other, after he arose to the imperial dignity, seem divested of their merit; and, without having recourse to moderate or magnanimous sentiments, may easily be explained, as
being

being perfectly consonant to the general tone of their characters. Sylla resigned the dictatorship, without any dread of suffering punishment for his antecedent cruelties; not because he had extirpated all those he had injured; but because his sensibility, and his power of discerning moral excellence, being originally languid, he felt no abhorrence of his own ferocity; and therefore, incapable of conceiving how any but real sufferers should feel or resent his barbarity, he was incapable of apprehension. Augustus, naturally of an unfeeling temper, committed inhuman actions in pursuing the honours he aspired to; and having established his authority as absolutely and as independently as he wished for, he had no sense of his former inhumanity, had no regret for the past, and no fear of the future. Reasoning on the same principles, we may easily reconcile some appearances of benignity and tender affection, in the conduct of Nero and

and of Herod, to their natural and original dispositions. That, in the early part of their lives, they discovered gentle and benign affections, is unquestioned. But their subsequent cruelties, and particularly, those related by ecclesiastical writers, have led men, indignant of their crimes, to pronounce them, in the very structure and constitution of their minds, monstrous and inhuman. Thus, from excessive resentment and indignation, we lessen the enormity of their guilt, charging that ferocity upon nature, which was the effect of their own impetuous and ungoverned passions. Sensibility is in itself amiable, and disposes us to benevolence: but, in corrupted minds, by infusing terror, it produces hatred and inhumanity. So dangerous is the dominion of vice, that being established in the mind, it bends to its baneful purposes even the principles of virtue. Lady Macbeth, of a character invariably savage, perhaps too savage to be a genuine representation

representation of nature *, proceeds easily, and without reluctance, to the contrivance of the blackest crimes. Macbeth, of a softer temper, and full of the "milk of human kindness," struggles, and is reluctant. Lady Macbeth encourages and incites him. He commits the deed, trembles, and is filled with horror. Lady Macbeth enjoys perfect composure, is neither shocked nor terrified, and reproves him for his fears.

Why, worthy Thane,
Do you unbend your noble strength to think
So brain-sickly of things ?——
My hands are of your colour, but I scorn
To wear a heart so white.

Macbeth, instigated by his apprehensions, meditates another act of barbarity. Lady Macbeth, so far from being afraid of consequences, or from having contrived another assassination, is even ignorant of his intentions ; but on being informed of them, she very easily acquiesces.

* Elements of Criticism.

Lady Macb. Come on ; gentle my lord,
Sleek o'er your rugged looks ; be bright and jovial
Among your guests to-night.

Macb. O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife !
Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance lives.

Lady Macb. What's to be done ?

Macb. Be innocent of the knowledge,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, feeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale.

Macbeth, instigated by his terrors, adds one act of cruelty to another ; and thus, instead of vanquishing his fears, he augments them. His agony increases, and renders him still more barbarous and distrustful.

There's not a thane of them, but in his house
I keep a servant fee'd.—

The castle of Macduff I will surprise, &c.

He, at length, meets with the punishment due to his enormous cruelty.

Macduff. Hail, King ! for so thou art. Behold,
where stands

Th' usurper's curst head.

Thus,

Thus, by considering the rise and progress of a ruling passion, and the fatal consequences of its indulgence, we have shown, how a beneficent mind may become inhuman: and how those who are naturally of an amiable temper, if they suffer themselves to be corrupted, will become more ferocious and more unhappy, than men of a constitution originally hard and unfeeling. The formation of our characters depends considerably upon ourselves; for we may improve, or vitiate, every principle we receive from nature.

SECTION II.

ON THE

CHARACTER OF HAMLET.

IN analyzing the mind of Hamlet, I shall accompany him in his different situations. I shall observe the various principles of action that govern him in various circumstances; and sum up the whole with a general view of his character.

In his first appearance, he discovers grief, aversion, and indignation. These emotions are in themselves indifferent: they are neither objects of censure nor of applause: they are of a secondary nature, and arise from some antecedent passion or affection.

affection. To judge, therefore, of their propriety, we must examine their motives, and the temper or state of mind that produces them. For we may grieve for the loss of a vicious gratification, no less than for those that are virtuous: and we may conceive aversion at worthy characters, no less than at their opposites. But the grief of Hamlet is for the death of a father: he entertains aversion against an incestuous uncle, and indignation at the ingratitude and guilt of a mother. Grief is passive: if its object be irretrievably lost, it is attended with no desires, and rouses no active principle. After the first emotions, it disposes us to silence, solitude, and inaction. If it is blended with other passions, its operations will pass unnoticed, lost in the violence of other emotions, though even these it may have originally excited, and may secretly stimulate. Accordingly, though sorrow be manifest in the features and demeanour of Hamlet,

aversion and indignation are the feelings he expresses. Aversion not only implies dislike and disapprobation of certain qualities, but also an apprehension of suffering by their communion; and, consequently, a desire of avoiding them. As it arises on the view of groveling and fordid qualities, we treat the character they belong to with contempt, rather than with indignation. They influence the imagination; we turn from them with disgust and loathing, as if they were capable of tainting us by their contagion; and, if those that possess them discover any expectation of our regarding them we are offended at their pretensions. Claudius, endeavouring to caress and flatter Hamlet, of whose virtues and abilities he is afraid, thinks of honouring him by a claim of consanguinity, and is replied to with symptoms of aversion and deep contempt. Yet Hamlet delivers himself ambiguously,
inclined

inclined to vent his displeasure, but unwilling to incur suspicion.

King. But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

Ham. A little more than kin, and less than kind.

King. How is it, that the clouds still hang on you?

Ham. Not so, my lord, I am too much i'the sun.

Aversion has no reference to any thing amiable or respectable. Indignation is different. It arises, as the etymology of the word indicates, from the sense of something unworthy. But the unworthy in human conduct affects us by contrast: and this contrast is either between the antecedent behaviour, or imagined good character of the agent, and the particular actions that expose him to our present censure; or it is between the merits of a sufferer, and the injuries he sustains. We say, your deed is unworthy, if you act inconsistently with your usual good conduct; and that you suffer unworthily, if behaving honourably you are defamed. The indignation of Hamlet arises from both of

these sources, both from the merit of his father, and from the behaviour of Gertrude. It is, therefore, vehement. But, as the circumstances of the times render it dangerous for him to discover his sentiments, and the real state of his mind, he governs them, as far as the ardour of his emotions allows him, and disguises their external symptoms. His indignation labours for utterance: and his reason strives to restrain it. He inveighs with keenness, but obliquely, against the insincerity of Gertrude's sorrow; and, in an indirect, but stinging manner, opposes her duty to her actual conduct.

Seems, Madam? nay, it is; I know not *seems*.
 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,
 Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
 No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
 Nor the dejected 'haviour of the visage,
 Together with all forms, modes, shews of grief,
 That can denote me truly.—These, indeed, seem,
 For they are actions that a man might play:

But

But I have that within, which passeth shew ;
These, but the trappings, and the suits of woe.

The human mind, possessed of distinguished faculties, and actuated by various principles, is, nevertheless, extremely limited. As the understanding is capable of attending but to a certain number of objects at a time, so the heart is never at the same time influenced by a number of violent passions. Perhaps there is a greater difference in the minds of men, in regard to the capacity of the understanding, than in regard to that of the heart. One man, perhaps, may contemplate at the same moment a wider range of ideas than another, but cannot, at the same moment, be agitated by a greater number of passions. It may, indeed, be a question, how far the capacity of the understanding may not influence the passions. In governing them, it may have some effect, as it may enable us to consider the object of our emotions under different aspects. For,

does it not often happen, that a partial view of an object renders the passion it excites more violent? Yet, if the soul is exceedingly moved, our thoughts will not arise in their natural and common order, but will be entirely regulated by the present passion or state of mind. It is a certain fact, confirmed by universal experience, and it may be laid down as an important axiom in the study of human nature, that our notions and opinions are ever influenced by our present temper. Happy is the man who is often calm and dispassionate; who, impelled by no eager appetite, nor urged by any restless affection, sees every object by the unerring light of reason, and is not imposed upon by the fallacious medium of his desires. Men of a susceptible nature, the prey of successive emotions, forever happy or miserable in extremes, often capricious and inconsistent, ought to cherish their lucid intervals, and dwell upon, and treasure up

up in their minds, those maxims of wisdom and of virtue, that, in times of internal tumult, may alluage their disorder, and administer peace to their souls. In consequence of the limited nature of the human heart, ever apt to be engrossed and occupied by present emotions, and of the power of passion to enslave the understanding, and possess it with notions suited to its own complexion; the mind of Hamlet, violently agitated, and filled with displeasing and painful images, loses all sense of felicity; and he even wishes for a change of being. The appearance is wonderful, and leads us to inquire into the affections and opinions that could render him so despondent. The death of his father was a natural evil, and as such he endures it. That he is excluded from succeeding immediately to the royalty which belongs to him, seems to affect him slightly; for to vehement and vain ambition he appears superior. He is moved
by

by finer principles, by an exquisite sense of virtue, of moral beauty and turpitude. The impropriety of Gertrude's behaviour, her ingratitude to the memory of her former husband, and the depravity she discovers in the choice of a successor, afflict his soul, and cast him into utter agony. Here then is the principle and spring of all his actions: let us observe it closely, as it excites other feelings and affections, unites or contends with him, is inflamed as they are inflamed, and governed as they are governed.

It is acknowledged, even by men of corrupted manners, that there is in human nature, a supreme, and, in many cases, a powerful principle, that pronounces sentence on the conduct of mankind, and, in well-regulated tempers, is a source of anguish or of delight. In minds uncommonly excellent, it is more frequently a fountain of bitter suffering, than of immediate pleasure. This may seem a paradox;

dox; but, by reflecting on the following brief observations, the difficulty will disappear. If our sense of virtue is exceedingly refined, or, in other words, if our standard of moral excellence is exceedingly elevated, comparing our own conduct with this exalted measure, and perceiving the difference, our joy on acting agreeably to the dictates of reason will suffer abatement. Add to this, that ingenuous minds, happy in the consciousness of their integrity, yet afraid of arrogating too much honour to themselves, will diminish the value of their good actions rather than augment it. The same delicacy of moral sentiment, the same elevated idea of perfection, will heighten the misery of a good man, if he accuses himself of any trespass. It is not the dread of punishment, for punishment is not always inflicted; it is not the pain of infamy, for wicked deeds may be done in secret; but it is the rebuke

rebuke of an internal cenfor, who will neither be flattered nor deceived.

Oime fon io fon io.

Che giova ch' io non oda e non paventi
I ditti 'el mormorar dell folle volgo,
O l' accuse de faggi, o i fieri morfi
Di troppo acuto o velenoso dente?
Se la mia propria confcienza immonda
Altamente nel cor rimbomba e mugge.

IL TORRISMONDO DELL TASSO.

The man whose sense of moral excellence is uncommonly exquisite, will find it a source of pleasure and of pain in his commerce with mankind. Susceptible of every moral impression, the display of virtuous actions will yield him delight, and the contrary excite uneasiness. He will not receive that genuine and supreme felicity in associating with the wealthy and the magnificent, the gay and the loquacious, if they have nothing in their hearts to recommend them, which he will enjoy in the society of gentle, benevolent, and enlightened spirits, though they are not the favourites

favourites of fortune, and have not that glitter and false brilliancy of intellectual endowments, that dazzle without being useful, yet often recommend men of slender abilities, and less virtue, to the attention of mankind. As moral qualities are those, principally, that produce and cement his attachments, the esteem he entertains for his associates will be exactly proportioned to their degree of merit. To erase an established affection, and substitute aversion, or even indifference, in its stead, does unutterable violence to our nature ; and to see those, for whom we have contracted habits of attachment and regard, act inconsistently with their former conduct, and appear with dispositions of an immoral kind, and so lay the axe to the root of our fairest friendships, overwhelms us with cruel anguish : our affliction will bear an exact proportion to our former tenderness, and consequently, to our idea of former merit. Add to this, that even
a slight

a slight transgression in those we esteem, if it is evidently a transgression, will affect us more sensibly than a gross enormity committed by a person indifferent to us. So delicate is your affection, and so refined your sense of moral excellence, when the moral faculty is softened into a tender attachment, that the sanctity and purity of the heart you love must appear to you without a stain. The triumph and inward joy of a son, on account of the same and the high desert of a parent, is of a nature very sublime and tender. His sorrow is no less acute and overwhelming, if those, united to him by a connection so intimate, have acted unbecomingly, and have incurred disgrace. Such is the condition of Hamlet. Exquisitely sensible of moral beauty and deformity, he discerns turpitude in a parent. Surprise, on a discovery so painful and unexpected, adds bitterness to his sorrow; and led, by the same moral principle, to admire and glory in the
high

high desert of his father, even this admiration contributes to his uneasiness. Aversion to his uncle, arising from the same origin, has a similar tendency, and augments his anguish. All these feelings and emotions uniting together, are rendered still more violent, exasperated by his recent interview with the Queen, struggling for utterance, but restrained. Agitated and overwhelmed with afflicting images, no soothing, no exhilarating affection can have admission into his heart. His imagination is visited by no vision of happiness; and he wishes for deliverance from his afflictions, by being delivered from a painful existence.

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew !
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God ! O God !
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world !
Fie on't ! O fie ! 'Tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to feed ; things rank, and gross in nature,
Possess it merely.

By

By giving vent to any passion, its violence at the time increaseth. Those, for instance, who express their sorrow by shedding tears, find themselves at the instant of weeping more excessively affected than persons of a more reserved and inflexible constitution. Yet, by thus giving vent to their inquietude, they find relief, while those of a taciturn humour are the victims of painful and unabating anxiety: and the reason is, that the emotion, raised to its highest extreme, can no longer continue equally violent, and so subsides. In cases of this nature, that is, when emotions, by being expressed, become excessive, the mind passes from general reflections to minute and particular circumstances: and imagination, the pliant flatterer of the passion in power, renders these circumstances still more particular, and better adapted to promote its vehemence. In the foregoing lines the reflections are general; but, in these that follow,

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That it should come to this !
But two months dead ! nay, not so much ; not two !
So excellent a king, that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr ! So loving to my mother,
That he might not let e'en the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly.

Heaven and earth !
Must I remember ? Why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on : and yet, within a month—

Observe too, that Hamlet's indignation is augmented gradually, by admiration of his father, 'So excellent a king;' by abhorrence of Claudius, 'That was, to this,

G

Hyperion

‘Hyperion to a satyr;’ and, finally, by a stinging reflection on the Queen’s inconstancy :

Why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on : and yet, within a month—

This affects him so severely, that he strives to obliterate the idea :

Let me not think on’t—

By this effort he loses sight, for a moment, of the particular circumstances that gave him pain. The impression, however, is not entirely effaced ; and he expresses it by a general reflection.

Frailty, thy name is woman !

This expression is too refined and artificial for a mind strongly agitated : yet, it agrees entirely with just such a degree of emotion and pensiveness, as disposes us to moralize. Considered as the language of a man violently affected, it is improper.

per: considered in relation to what goes before and follows after, it appears perfectly natural. Hamlet's laboured composure is imperfect; it is exceedingly transient; and he relapses into deeper anguish. Though he turned aside from a painful idea, he was unable to remove the impression, or vary in any considerable degree his state of mind. The impression remained, and restored the idea in its fullest vigour.

A little month; or ere those shoes were old,
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears—Why, she, even she—
O heaven! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules.

It is also observable, that, in consequence of the increasing violence of his emotion, the time so dexterously diminished from two months, to a little month, and to even less than a little month, is rendered

G 2

rendered as it were visible by allusions and circumstances so striking, as to have in themselves a powerful tendency to stimulate and augment his anguish.

Or ere those shoes were old,
With which she follow'd my poor father's body, &c.

And again :

Within a month—
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing on her gauled eyes—
She married !

The crisis of his agitation heightened to its extremity, is strongly marked in the following exclamation :

Oh, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets.

The observation following immediately after, is that of a mind reflecting with some composure, on effects and consequences.

It is not, nor it cannot come to good.

Hamlet

Hamlet in his retirement, expresses his agony without reserve, and by giving it utterance he receives relief. In public he restrains it, and welcomes his friends with that ease and affability which are the result of polished manners, good sense, and humanity. His conversation, though familiar, is graceful: yet, in his demeanour, we discover a certain air of pensiveness and solemnity, arising naturally from his internal trouble.

Hor. Hail to your Lordship!

Ham. I am glad to see you well;

Horatio,—or I do forget myself?

Hor. The same, my Lord, and your poor servant ever.

Ham. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you.

And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?
Marcellus!

Mar. My good Lord—

Ham. I am very glad to see you; good-even, Sir.

—But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

Hor. A truant disposition, good my Lord.

Ham. I would not hear your enemy say so;

Nor shall you do mine ear that violence.

To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself. I know, you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elfenour?
We'll teach you to drink deep, ere you depart.

Hor. My Lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

On a subject so interesting as his father's funeral, he cannot easily command himself: and, reposing confidence in the loyalty of his friend, he does not entirely disguise his emotion. He corrects it, however; and avoiding any appearance of violence or of extravagance, he expresses himself with humour.

I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow student;
I think, it was to see my mother's wedding.

Hor. Indeed, my Lord, it follow'd hard upon.

Ham. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral bak'd meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Yet he is too violently agitated to preserve, uniformly, the character of a cheerful satirist. He becomes serious.

Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven,
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio.

Having

Having expressed himself strongly, and possessing a delicate sense of propriety, he thinks it necessary to explain the cause. About to preface it with an account of his father, he mentions him :

My father—

The idea strikes his mind with a sudden and powerful impulse: he pauses: forgets his intention of explaining himself to Horatio: the image of his father possesses him: and, by the most solemn and striking apostrophe that ever poet invented, he impresses it on his audience.

Methinks I see my father !

Hor. O where, my Lord ?

Ham. In my mind's eye, Horatio.

Returning from his reverie, he mentions his character to Horatio, not by a particular detail, but in a summary manner, as if it were the result of a preceding enumeration. Horatio, astonished at his abstracted aspect and demeanour, and

having imagined that he saw the apparition which he had himself beheld, by a natural and easy transition, makes mention of the ghost.

Hor. I saw him once, he was a goodly king.

Ham. He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

Hor. My Lord, I think, I saw him yesternight, &c.

The whole of this scene between Hamlet and his friends is masterly and affecting. Hamlet, exceedingly moved, expresses amazement: yet he utters nothing verbose and extravagant, nor any violent exclamation of wonder. The narration is simple, and the dialogue easy. Though the prince can entertain no doubt of the veracity of his friends, he is not credulous: and he questions them very minutely concerning the circumstances of the prodigy. His inquiries indicate extreme uneasiness, and even suspicion concerning his father's death: yet he moderates his apprehensions, and will not indulge

dulge his suspicion, till, by the testimony of his senses, he is assured of the fact.

I'll watch to-night ; perchance, 'twill walk again.

I cannot quit this admirable scene, without remarking the superiority of a natural, simple, and unaffected dialogue to the vanity of figurative and elaborate diction. It has been of late insinuated, that poetical genius is on the decline, and that, if modern dramatic writers abound in declamation and artificial ornament, instead of the language of nature, it is owing to the languor and sterility of their invention. May not the cause be different? Are we confident, if there was exhibited to us a genuine representation of human passions and manners, conveyed in artless unaffected language, that we should comply with the admonitions of nature, and applaud as our feelings dictate? Are we confident that the pride of learning and the vanity of possessing critical discernment,

ment, do not impose on our better judgment, and that we are not more attentive to the harmony of a period, than to the happy utterance of an ardent passion?

Hamlet, in some of the foregoing passages, betrays suspicion. But suspicion is not natural to a humane and ingenuous temper. Is it, therefore, a blemish, or the result of an amiable disposition influenced by a sense of virtue?

It is a property of the imagination, when governed by any passion or opinion, to follow the impulse it has received, and to diminish or aggrandize any object not perfectly known to us, according to the judgment we may have formed of it. Under the influence of fear, men, tainted with superstition, people darkness and the night with spectres, and terrify and torment themselves with imaginary danger. If we are threatened with any unusual calamity, the nature and extent of which is unknown to us, governed by our terrors,

we

we render its stature gigantic: but, if actuated by an intrepid spirit, we brave and undervalue it; approaching to temerity and overweening confidence, we are apt to lessen it beyond its real size. If a man of plausible manners, dexterous in displaying his genius and understanding, secures your esteem, and an opinion of his being endowed with uncommon abilities, you set no limits to his capacity, and, imagining him wiser and more ingenious than he really is, you are almost led to revere him. To explain the cause of these appearances is difficult: yet a conjecture may be hazarded. If we think attentively on any subject, a number of ideas arise in our minds concerning it. These ideas are of qualities and properties which may belong to it, or of the relations it may have to other objects, but of which we have no actual evidence; yet we cannot negatively affirm that they do not belong to it; on the contrary, if they are agreeable

to

to its nature and circumstances, their spontaneous appearance in our minds, as connected with it, affords a presumption that they really exist. Our belief, though not absolutely confirmed, is yet swayed by a plausible probability; and what strengthens it still the more, is a reflection on the narrowness of our powers, and the imperfection of our senses. We reason from analogy, and think it impossible that an object should be so completely known to us, as that we can pronounce with certainty that we are intimately acquainted with the whole of its structure; and that qualities agreeing perfectly with its nature do not reside in it, merely because we do not discern them. As we are naturally prone to action, a state of doubt and suspense is ever accompanied with uneasiness; we bear uncertainty with reluctance; we must be resolved; and if we cannot prove a negative, even a slight probability will influence our belief. Therefore,

fore, since ideas of corresponding qualities and relations do arise, and engage the attention of our judging faculty, we seldom hesitate, but ascribe them immediately to the cause or object of our emotion. According to the vivacity of the idea, will be the energy of its impression; and, according to the force of the impression, will be our eagerness to decide. But the vivacity of the idea depends on the strength of the exciting passion; therefore, proportioned to the vehemence of the passion, will be our credulity and proneness to be convinced. It is also manifest, that, if any object is naturally difficult to be apprehended, and is so complex or delicate as to elude the acuteness of our discernment, or the intenseness of our inquiry, we shall be more liable to error in cases of this nature, than in those things that we perceive distinctly. Admiring the man of abilities, we cannot define with accuracy the precise boundaries of his
genius;

genius; our imaginations give him energies additional to those he exhibits; and it is agreeable to our opinion of his endowments, and consonant to our present temper, to believe him more eminent than he really is. We are apt to judge in the same manner of the qualities of the heart. To the man who amazes us by some feat of personal bravery, we ascribe every heroic virtue, though he may have never displayed them: and we pronounce liberal, generous, and disinterested, the man who surprises us by some unexpected beneficence. On the same principles, those who excite our indignation by their ungrateful or inhuman conduct, are supposed to have trampled on every moral obligation; and we load them not only with the infamy of the crime they have committed, but with that of the crimes of which we believe them capable. The size and colour, so to express myself, of the imaginary qualities in this manner attributed

to any object, will correspond exactly to the violence of the present emotion, or the obstinacy of our opinion. If our sense of virtue is exceedingly delicate, our indignation and abhorrence of vice will be of proportioned vehemence; and, according to their vehemence, will be the atrocity of the indefinite imaginary qualities ascribed to the object of our abhorrence. If those whose conduct we censure or lament were formerly esteemed by us, surprise and sorrow for our disappointment, and indignation at a change so unexpected, will augment the violence of our emotion, and so magnify their offences. Hence friendship, changed by neglect or ingratitude into indifference, grows into a hatred of all others the most virulent and full of rancour. It is not wonderful, therefore, nor inconsistent with amiable and kind affections, that Hamlet, moved by an exquisite sense of virtue and propriety, shocked and astonished at the ingratitude

titude and guilt of Gertrude, whom he had revered and believed incapable of any blemish, should become apprehensive of the total degeneracy of her nature, and harbour suspicions concerning his father's death. To these suspicions, the suddenness of the event, the extraordinary and mysterious circumstances attending it, together with the character of the present king, give abundant colour. Hence, with a heart full of agony, prepared for the evidence, and willing to receive it, he exclaims,

All is not well !

I doubt some foul play.

Had Hamlet been more indifferent in his regard to propriety and moral obligation, he would have entertained less esteem for his father, less aversion at Claudius, and less displeasure at the hasty nuptials of Gertrude : he would have entertained no suspicion, nor have given way to resentment : wholly void of anxiety,
and

and vexed by no uneasy reflection, he would have enjoyed the happiness of his exalted station. The observation is painful : it infers, that the union between virtue and happiness, so highly vaunted of by many moralists, is not so independent of external incidents as their theories would represent.

Shakespeare was abundantly capable of exhibiting the progress of suspicion in the mind of Hamlet till it was ripened into belief. Yet he proceeds in a different manner, and confirms his apprehensions by a testimony, that, according to the prejudices of the times, could not easily be refuted. In this he acted judiciously: the difficulty was worthy of the interposition. Besides it was an interposition perfectly agreeable to the religious opinions of an unenlightened people : and afforded an opportunity of enriching the drama with a very awful and pathetic incident. The ghost of Hamlet, even in nations where

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philosophy flourishes, and in periods the least addicted to superstition, will forever terrify and appal.

I am thy father's spirit ;
 Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
 And, for the day, confin'd to fast in fires,
 Till the foul crimes, done in my days of nature,
 Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid
 To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
 I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
 Would harrow up thy soul ; freeze thy young blood ;
 Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres ;
 Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
 And each particular hair to stand on end
 Like quills upon the fretful porcupine :
 But this eternal blazon must not be
 To ears of flesh and blood.—Lift ! lift ! oh lift !
 If thou didst ever thy dear father love, &c.

The awful horror excited by the foregoing passage, is accomplished by simplicity of expression, and by the * uncertainty of the thing described. The description is indirect ; and, by exhibiting a picture of the effects, an actual view of the

* Burke on the sublime and beautiful.

real object would necessarily produce in the spectator, it affects us more strongly than by a positive enumeration of the most dreadful circumstances. The imagination left to her own inventions, overwhelmed with obscurity, travels far into the regions of terror, into the abysses of fiery and unfathomable darkness.

The condition of Hamlet's mind becomes still more curious and interesting. His suspicions are confirmed, and beget resentment. Conceiving designs of punishment, conscious of very violent perturbation, perceiving himself already suspected by the King, afraid lest his aspect, gesture, or demeanour should betray him, and knowing that his projects must be conducted with secrecy, he resolves to conceal himself under the disguise of madness.

Swear, as before, never, to help you mercy !
How strange or odd foe'er I bear myself,
As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on,
That you, at such time seeing me, never shall

H 2

(With

(With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
 Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
*As, well, well,—we know ;—or, we could, and if we
 would ;—*

Or, if we list to speak ;—or, there be, an if there might ;
 Or such ambiguous giving out) denote
 That you know aught of me.

As it is of signal consequence to him to have the rumour of his madness believed and propagated, he endeavours to render the counterfeit specious. There is nothing that reconciles men more readily to believe in any extraordinary appearance than to have it accounted for. A reason of this kind is often more plausible and imposing than many forcible arguments, particularly if the theory or hypothesis be of our own invention. Accordingly, Hamlet, the more easily to deceive the King and his creatures, and to furnish them with an explication of his uncommon deportment, practises his artifice on Ophelia.

Oph. Alas, my Lord, I have been so affrighted!

Pol. With what ?

Oph.

Opb. My Lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet—with his doublet all unbrac'd,
No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd, &c.

And with a look so piteous in purport,
As if he had been loosed out of hell,
To speak of horrors; he comes before me.

Pol. Mad for thy love?

Opb. My Lord, I do not know;
But, truly, I do fear it.

Pol. What said he?

Opb. He took me by the wrist, and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arms;
And, with his other hand, thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face,
As he would draw it, &c.

Pol. This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property foredoes itself,
And leads the will to desperate undertakings, &c.

There is no change in his attachment, unless in so far as other passions of a violent and unpleasing character have assumed a temporary influence. His affection is permanent. Nor ought the pretended rudeness and seeming inconsistency of his behaviour to be at all attributed to incon-

stancy or an intention to insult. Engaged in a dangerous enterprise, agitated by impetuous emotions, desirous of concealing them, and, for that reason, feigning his understanding disordered; to confirm and publish this report, seemingly so hurtful to his reputation, he would act in direct opposition to his former conduct, and inconsistently with the genuine sentiments and affections of his soul. He would seem frivolous when the occasion required him to be sedate: and, celebrated for the wisdom and propriety of his conduct, he would assume appearances of impropriety: full of honour and affection, he would seem inconsistent: of elegant and agreeable manners, and possessing a complacent temper, he would put on the semblance of rudeness. To Ophelia he would shew dislike and indifference; because a change of this nature would be, of all others, the most remarkable, and because his affection for her was passionate and sincere.

sincere. Of the sincerity and ardour of his regard he gives undoubted evidence.

I lov'd Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.

The tendency of indignation, and of furious and inflamed resentment, is to inflict punishment on the offender. But, if resentment is ingrafted on the moral faculty, and grows from it, its tenor and conduct will be different: in its first emotion it may breathe excessive and immediate vengeance; but sentiments of justice and propriety interposing, will arrest and suspend its violence. An ingenuous mind, thus agitated by powerful and contending principles, exceedingly tortured and perplexed, will appear hesitating and undetermined. Thus the vehemence of the vindictive passion will by delay suffer abatement; by its own ardour it will be exhausted; and our natural and habituated propensities will resume their influ-

ence. These continue in possession of the heart till the mind reposes and recovers vigour; and, if the conviction of injury still remains, and if our resentment seems justified by every amiable principle, by reason and the sentiments of mankind, it will return with power and authority. Should any unintended incident awaken our sensibility, and dispose us to a state of mind favourable to the influences and operations of ardent and impetuous passions, our resentment will revisit us at that precise period, and turn in its favour, and avail itself of every other sentiment and affection. The mind of Hamlet, weary and exhausted by violent agitation, continues doubtful and undecided, till his sensibility, excited by a theatrical exhibition, restores to their authority his indignation and desire of vengeance. Still, however, his moral principles, the supreme and governing powers of his constitution, conducting those passions which they

they seem to justify and excite, determine him again to examine his evidence, or endeavour, by additional circumstances, to have it strengthened.

Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I !
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to its own conceit,
That, from her working, all his visage wan'd ;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting,
With forms, to his conceit ? and all for nothing ?
For Hecuba !
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her ? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion,
That I have ? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze, indeed,
The very faculty of ears and eyes.
Yet, I say, nothing ; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property, and most dear life,
A damn'd defeat was made.—
I have heard,
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene

Been

Been struck so to the soul, that presently
 They have proclaim'd their malefactions.
 I'll have these players
 Play something like the murder of my father
 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks ;
 I'll tent him to the quick ; if he but blench,
 I know my course. The spirit, that I have seen,
 May be the devil ; and the devil hath power
 To assume a pleasing shape ; yea, and, perhaps,
 Out of my weakness, and my melancholy,
 (As he is very potent with such spirits)
 Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
 More relative than this.

Resolving to carry his project into execution, he conducts himself with his usual candour and understanding. In an affair so difficult and so important, he does not confide in his own observations ; but, in order to have his judgment rectified, in case of error, and to have his resentment tempered, in case of violence, he imparts his intention to Horatio. Hamlet,

The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
 The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,

knew

knew the sanctity of friendship, its uses, and its importance. His friend was not merely the partner of his amusements, to be his associate in his pleasures, and to cherish his vanity by adulation : he was a friend to counsel and assist him in doubtful emergencies, to improve his heart, and correct his judgment. The qualities that distinguish Horatio, and render him worthy of the esteem of Hamlet, are not affluence, nor pageantry, nor gay accomplishments, nor vivacity, nor even wit, and uncommon genius, too often allied to an impetuous temper ; he is distinguished by that equanimity and independence of soul which arise from governed and corrected passions, from a sound and discerning judgment.

Horatio, thou art even as just a man,
As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.

Hor. Oh my dear Lord—

Ham. Nay, do not think I flatter :

For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast, but thy good spirits,

To

To feed and cloath thee ?

Dost thou hear ?

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,

And could of men distinguish, her election

Hath seal'd thee for herself : for thou hast been

As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing ;

A man, that fortune's buffets and rewards

Hast ta'en with equal thanks.*

Give me that man

That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him

In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,

As I do thee.

Hamlet, by means of a dramatic exhibition, into which he had introduced the representation of his father's murder, having assured himself of the guilt of Claudius by his emotions, has no longer any doubt concerning the propriety of his resentment. If we are eagerly interested in any pursuit, whether of an end, or of a mean by which some end may be accomplished, our success is ever attended with joy, even when the end we are pursuing is in itself a foundation of sorrow. It fre-

* In quem manca ruit semper fortuna. HOR.

quently

quently happens too, if anger or resentment have taken possession of the soul, and have excited a desire of vengeance; and if there is yet some uncertainty concerning the reality or grossness of the injury we have received, that, till reflection operates, we are better pleased to have our suspicions confirmed, and our resentment gratified, than to be convicted of an error, and so be delivered from a painful passion. Hamlet, pleased with the success of his project, though its issue justified his resentment, discovers gaiety, the natural expression and sign of joy.

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play :
For some must watch, while some must sleep;
So runs the world away.

No scene was ever better imagined than that where Rosincrantz and Guildenstern accost the Prince : the creatures of Claudius, and, instigated by the Queen, they are employed as spies upon Hamlet. He perceives

perceives it, and treats them with deserved contempt: in such a manner, however, as to conceal, as much as possible, the real state of his mind. Yet he is teased with their importunity. The transient gaiety of his humour, as it proceeded from a transient cause, is soon dissipated, and is succeeded by reflections on his condition. His anger and resentment are inflamed; and, indignant that the unworthy engines of a vile usurper should be thought capable of insnaring him, he confounds them, by shewing them he had penetrated their design, and overwhelms them with the supercilious dignity of his displeasure.

Ham. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil. My Lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you.

Guil. Believe me, I cannot.

Ham. I do beseech you.

Guil. I know no touch of it, my Lord.

Ham. 'Tis as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

OF HAMLET.

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Guil. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony ; I have not the skill.

Ham. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me ? you would play upon me ; you would seem to know my stops ; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery ; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass : and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. Why, do you think, that I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe ?

The King, alarmed by the consciousness of his guilt, and rendered wary by the suspicions naturally accompanying the dread of punishment, becomes exceedingly apprehensive of the designs of Hamlet. Accordingly, he engages his mother to question him, to sift his soul, and detect him. Rosincrantz and Guildenstern invite him to the conference. They are followed by another engine, who, with all the fawning and self-sufficiency of a courtier, grown gray in adulation and paltry cunning, endeavours, by assentation, to secure his confidence, and so elicit his secret purpose.

pose. Hamlet, fretted and exasperated with a treatment so ill suited to his sentiments and understanding, receives him with contempt; he endeavours to impose on him the belief of his madness, but can hardly bridle his indignation.

Pol. My Lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.

Ham. Do you see yonder cloud, that's almost in shape of a camel?

Pol. By the mass, and its like a camel, indeed! &c.

The perfidy and guilt of Claudius are now unquestioned. All the circumstances of the murder are stamped indelibly on the imagination of Hamlet. Yet, though vehemently incensed, the gentle and affectionate principles of his nature preserve their influence, and to the unhappy Gertrude he will not be inhuman. His character, in this particular, is finely distinguished from the Orestes either of Sophocles or of Euripides. His gentleness is far more natural, and renders him more amiable

able and more esteemed*. His violent resentment against his uncle is contrasted, in a very striking manner, with the warnings of his moral faculty, and the tenderness of his affection.

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When church-yards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot
blood,

And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft; now to my mother—
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom :
Let me be cruel, not unnatural :
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

The scene between the Queen and Hamlet has been highly celebrated, and

* In favour of Orestes, it may, however, be argued, that he was compelled to put Clytemnestra to death by religious motives and the voice of the oracle : Hamlet, on the contrary, was deterred by a similar authority from conceiving vengeance against the Queen, and was warned by the ghost,

Not to contrive against his mother aught.

I

cannot

cannot fail, even though less advantageously represented than by a Garrick and a Pritchard, to agitate every audience. The time, 'the very witching time of night,' and the state of Hamlet's mind, when 'he could drink hot blood, and do such bitter business as the day would quake to look on,' prepare us for this important conference. The situation, that of a son endeavouring to reclaim a parent, is exceedingly interesting. All the sentiments and emotions are animated, and expressive of character. In the Queen we discern the confidence of a guilty mind, that, by the artifices of self-deceit, has put to silence the upbraidings of conscience. We discern in her the dexterity of those perverted by evil habits, to abuse their own understandings, and conceal from themselves their blemishes. We also perceive in her the anguish and horror of a mind, appalled and confounded by the consciousness of its depravity, and its eager solicitude

tude to be rescued, by any means, from the persecuting and painful feeling. Hamlet, full of affection, studies to secure her tranquillity: and, guided by moral principles, he endeavours to establish it on the foundation of virtue. Animated by every generous and tender sentiment, and convinced of the superior excellence and dignity of an unblemished conduct, he cannot bear that those who are dear to him should be depraved. It is to gratify this amiable temper, that he labours to renew, in the misguided Gertrude, a sense of honour and of merit, to turn her attention, without subterfuge or disguise, on her own behaviour; and so restore her to her former fame. He administers his medicine with reluctance: it is harsh, but the disease is desperate. It is not suitable to the agitated state of his mind, to enter sedately into a formal and argumentative discussion of the impiety and immorality of her conduct: he mentions these in a

summary manner; and, following the impulse of his own mind, he speaks the language of strong emotion, addresses her feelings, and endeavours to convey into her heart some portion of the indignation with which he is himself inflamed.

Look here upon this picture, and on this ;
 The counterfeited presentment of two brothers.
 See, what a grace was seated on this brow :
 Hyperion's curls ; the front of Jove himself ;
 An eye, like Mars, to threaten or command ;
 A station, like the herald Mercury,
 New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill ;
 A combination, and a form, indeed,
 Where every god did seem to set his seal,
 To give the world assurance of a man :
 This *was* your husband.—Look you now, what follows ;
 Here *is* your husband ; like a mildew'd ear,
 Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes ?
 Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
 And batten on this moor ? Ha ! have you eyes ?

The contrast in these lines co-operating with other causes, has a very striking effect. The transition from admiration to abhorrence, in a remarkable degree,

beauty

heightens the latter. Hamlet dwells minutely on every circumstance of his father's character: but, passing from that to the picture of Claudius, his perturbation is visibly augmented; his indignation and abhorrence are almost too excessive for utterance; and the difference between the two characters appearing to him so manifest as to render a particular illustration needless, he reflects with severity on that woful perversion of mind which blunted the feelings and perceptions of Gertrude.

You cannot call it, love; for, at your age,
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment; and what judgment
Would step from this to this?

He convinces her of her guilt: but so fallacious and so imposing are evil habits, that, in spite of her recent conviction, she would yield herself to their suggestions: by supposing her son disordered, she would lessen the authority of his argument,

ment, and so relapse. Hamlet, perceiving the workings of her invention, and anxious for her recovery, touches the distempered part of her soul with a delicate and skillful hand: he infuses such golden instruction, and discovers such penetration and knowledge of human nature, as would have dignified a philosopher. He tempers the severity of his admonition with mildness; and assures her in a pathetic manner, that affection, and zeal for her welfare, are his only motives.

Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness, speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place;
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to Heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue:
For, in the fatness of these purfying times,
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo, for leave to do him good.

Q. Oh Hamlet! thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Ham.

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As the contrition of Gertrude, and her consequent good intentions were the effect of a sudden emotion, its violence no sooner abates, than her former habits resume their influence. She appears irresolute: and Hamlet, full of astonishment and indignation, expresses himself with keenness. He inveighs with acrimony against his uncle: and the Queen, vanquished by his invective, assures him of her repentance.

All the business of the tragedy, in re-
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gard to the display of character, is here concluded. Hamlet, having detected the perfidy and inhumanity of his uncle, and having restored the Queen to a sense of her depravity, ought immediately to have triumphed in the utter ruin of his enemies, or to have fallen a victim to their deceit. The succeeding circumstances of the play are unnecessary; they are not essential to the catastrophe: and, excepting the madness of Ophelia, and the scene of the grave-diggers, they exhibit nothing new in the characters. On the contrary, the delay cools our impatience; it diminishes our solicitude for the fate of Hamlet, and almost lessens him in our esteem. Let him perish immediately, since the poet dooms him to perish: yet poetical justice would have decided otherwise.

On reviewing this analysis, a sense of virtue, if I may use the language of an eminent philosopher, without professing myself of his sect, seems to be the ruling principle.

principle. In other men, it may appear with the ensigns of high authority : in Hamlet, it possesses absolute power. United with amiable affections, with every graceful accomplishment, and every agreeable quality, it embellishes and exalts them. It rivets his attachment to his friends, when he finds them deserving : it is a source of sorrow, if they appear corrupted. It even sharpens his penetration ; and, if unexpectedly he discerns turpitude or impropriety in any character, it inclines him to think more deeply of their transgression, than if his sentiments were less refined. It thus induces them to scrutinize their conduct, and may lead him to the discovery of more enormous guilt. As it excites uncommon pain and abhorrence on the appearance of perfidious and inhuman actions, it provokes and stimulates his resentment : yet, attentive to justice, and concerned in the interests of human nature, it governs the impetuosity
of

of that unruly passion. It disposes him to be cautious in admitting evidence to the prejudice of another: it renders him distrustful of his own judgment, during the ardour and the reign of passion; and directs him in the choice of associates, on whose fidelity and judgment he may depend. If softened by a beneficent and gentle temper, he hesitates in the execution of any lawful enterprise, it reproves him. And if there is any hope of restoring those that are fallen, and of renewing in them habits of virtue and of self-command, it renders him assiduous in his endeavours to serve them. Men of other dispositions would think of gratifying their friends by contributing to their affluence, to their amusement, or external honour: but, the acquisitions that Hamlet values, and the happiness he would confer, are a conscience void of offence, the peace and the honour of virtue. Yet, with all this purity of moral sentiment, with eminent abilities,

abilities, exceedingly cultivated and improved, with manners the most elegant and becoming, with the utmost rectitude of intention, and the most active zeal in the exercise of every duty, he is hated, persecuted, and destroyed.

SECTION III.

ON THE

CHARACTER

OF THE

MELANCHOLY JAQUES.

JAQUES, in *AS-YOU-LIKE-IT*, is exhibited to us in extraordinary circumstances, and in a situation very romantic.

Lord. To-day my Lord of Amiens, and myself,
Did steal behind him, as he lay along
Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood :
To the which place a poor sequester'd stag,

That

That from the hunters' aim had ta'en a hurt,
 Did come to languish; and, indeed, my Lord,
 The wretched animal heav'd forth such groans,
 That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
 Almost to bursting; and the big round tears
 Cours'd one another down his innocent nose
 In piteous chase: and thus the hairy fool,
 Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,
 Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
 Augmenting it with tears.

Duke. But what said Jaques?

Did he not moralize this spectacle?

Lord. O yes, into a thousand families.

First, for his weeping in the needful stream;

Poor deer, quoth he, *thou mak'st a testament*

As worldlings do, giving thy sum of more,

To that which had too much. Then, being alone,

Left and abandoned of his velvet friends;

'Tis right, quoth he; *thus misery doth part*

The flux of company. Anon, a careless herd,

Full of the pasture, jumps along by him,

And never stays to greet him. *Ay,* quoth Jaques,

Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;

'Tis just the fashion: wherefore do you look

Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?

The most striking character in the mind
 of Jaques, according to this description,

is

is extreme sensibility. He discovers a heart strongly disposed to compassion, and susceptible of the most tender impressions of friendship: for he who can so feelingly deplore the absence of kindness and humanity, must be capable of relishing the delight annexed to their exercise. But sensibility is the soil where nature has planted social and sweet affections: by sensibility they are cherished, and grow mature. Social dispositions produce all those amiable and endearing connections that alleviate the sorrows of human life, adorn our nature, and render us happy. Now Jaques, avoiding society, and burying himself in the lonely forest, seems to act inconsistently with his constitution. He possesses sensibility; sensibility begets affection; and affection begets the love of society. But Jaques is unsocial. Can these inconsistent qualities be reconciled? Or has Shakespeare exhibited a character of which the parts are incongruous, and discordant?

discordant? In other words, how happens it that a temper disposed to beneficence, and addicted to social enjoyment, becomes solitary and morose? changes of this kind are not unfrequent: and, if researches into the origin or cause of a distemper can direct us in the discovery of an antidote or of a remedy; our present inquiry is of importance. Perhaps, the excess and luxuriance of benevolent dispositions blighted by unkindness or ingratitude, is the cause that, instead of yielding us fruits of complacency and friendship, they shed bitter drops of misanthropy.

Aversion from society proceeds from dislike to mankind, and from an opinion of the inefficacy, and uncertainty of external pleasure. Let us consider each of these apart: let us trace the progress by which they established themselves in the mind of Jaques, and gave his temper an unnatural colour.

I. The gratification of our social affections supposes friendship and esteem for others; and these dispositions suppose in their object virtues of a corresponding character: for every one values his own opinion, and fancies the person to whom he testifies esteem actually deserves it. If beneficent affections, ardent and undisciplined, predominate in our constitution, and govern our opinions, we enter into life strongly prepossessed in favour of mankind, and endeavour, by a generous and disinterested conduct, to render ourselves worthy of their regard. That spirit of diffusive goodness, which eloquent and benign philosophy recommends, but without success, to men engaged in the commerce of the world, operates untroubled. The heart throbs with astonishment and indignation at every act of injustice, and our bowels yearn to relieve the afflicted. Our beneficence is unlimited: we are free from suspicion: our friendships

ships are eagerly adopted; they are ardent and sincere. This conduct may, for a time, be flattered: our fond imaginations may heighten every trivial act of complacency into a testimony of unfeigned esteem. And thus, deceived by delusive appearances, we become still more credulous and profuse. But the fairy vision will soon vanish: and the novice who vainly trusted to the benevolence of mankind, will suddenly find himself alone and desolate, in the midst of a selfish and deceitful world: like an enchanted traveller, who imagines he is journeying through a region of delight, till he drinks of some bitter fountain, and instantly, instead of flowery fields and meadows, he finds himself destitute and forlorn, amid the horrors of a dreary desert.

It seems an invariable law in the conduct of our passions, that, independent of the object they pursue, they should yield us pleasure, merely by their exercise and
K operation.

operation. It is known by experience, that the pain of disappointed passion is not solely occasioned by our being deprived of some desirable object, but by having the current of the mind opposed; so that the excited passion recoils exasperated upon the heart. The anguish of this situation is strongly expressed by Seneca, "In angusto inclusæ cupiditates sine exitu se ipsas strangulant." There can be no doubt, that anger, malice, and all the malevolent and irregular passions, independent of their fatal consequences, leave the mind in a state of anxiety and disorder. One should therefore imagine, that satisfaction would arise from their being repulsed, and that men would felicitate themselves for a recovery so essential to their repose. Reason, and self-love may consider it in this view, and our sense of propriety may hinder us from complaining; but the heart is secretly dejected, and the unbidden sigh betrays us. The gloom, however,

however, is soon dispersed; yet it proves that the mind suffers more when its operations are suddenly suspended, than when it languishes in a state of listless inactivity. Thus, our benevolent affections, considered merely as principles of action, partaking of the same common nature with other passions and affections, if their tenor is interrupted, produce anxiety.

But the peculiar character of these dispositions renders the anguish occasioned by their suspension more exquisitely painful. They are of a soft exhilarating nature, they elevate and enlarge our conceptions, they refine our feelings, they quicken our sensibility, and stimulate our love of pleasure: they diffuse joy and serenity through the soul, and, by a delightful illusion, give every thing around us a smiling and enlivened aspect. To a mild and benevolent temper, even inanimate objects, the beauties of nature, the skies, the groves, and the fountains, com-

communicate unusual pleasure, and of a quality too refined to be relished by vulgar and malignant spirits. But, proportioned to the delight annexed to the exercise of social affections, is the pain arising from their suspension.

Social affections confer happiness, not only by the feelings they excite in us, but by procuring us the friendship and esteem of others. Adequate returns of tenderness are essential to their existence. By disdain and indifference they languish; they render us anxious and desponding.

Other advantages less immediate, and which concern our fortune and external circumstances, often depend on the benevolence and sincerity of our friends. For, though it is contrary to the rules of prudence, and the maxims of the world, to repose such entire confidence in the virtue of mankind as to render it possible for them to injure or ruin us; yet there are cases of strong necessity that mock reserve; and
there

there are instances of men so unsuspecting, or so improvident, as to allow themselves, by excessive facility, to be over-reached and undone.

The disappointments of social affection may give us uneasiness of another kind: they may offend against the good opinion we are apt to entertain of ourselves; a principle rivetted in our constitution, useful and necessary in itself, but, by disposing us to overweening conceit, liable to be perverted.

Pain and uneasiness give rise to sorrow; and sorrow varies according to the sources from which it flows: it is either gentle and languishing, or imbittered with rancour and animosity.

When the uneasiness arises from the sudden and untoward suspension of our emotions, or from the disappointment of some ardent affection, it is of a mild and dejected nature. It may dispose us to remonstrate, but not to inveigh. It is mo-

deft and unassuming. It even induces us to think indifferently of ourfelves, and, by laying the blame on our own unworthinefs, to excufe the inattention or difdain of others.

Perhaps I was void of all thought,
 Perhaps it was plain to forefee,
 That a nymph fo complete would be fought
 By a fwain more engaging than me.

Sorrow of this tender complexion, leading us to complain, but not to accufe, and finding remonftrances and complaint ineffectual, retires from fociety, and ponders its woe in fecret.

Ye woods, fpread your branches apace,
 To your deepeft receffes I fly;
 I would hide with the beafts of the chafe,
 I would vanifh from every eye.

The ftate of mind produced by thefe emotions, is exhibited to us with uncommon tendernefs and fimplicity by Orlando.
 " If I'm foiled, there is but one fhamed
 " that was never gracious: if killed, but
 " one

“ one dead that is willing to be so: I shall
“ do my friends no wrong, for I have
“ none to lament: the world no injury,
“ for in it I have nothing: only in the
“ world I fill up a place which may be
“ better supplied when I have made it
“ empty.”

But, when ambition, avarice, or vanity are concerned, our sorrow is acrimonious, and mixed with anger. If, by trusting to the integrity and beneficence of others, our fortune be diminished, or not augmented as we expected; or if we are not advanced and honoured agreeably to our desires, and the idea we had formed of our own desert, we conceive ourselves injured. Injury provokes resentment, and resentment moves us to retaliate. Accordingly, we retaliate: we inveigh against mankind: we accuse them of envy, perfidy, and injustice. We fancy ourselves the apostles or champions of virtue, and go forth to combat and confound her op-

ponents. The celebrated Swift, possessing uncommon abilities, and actuated by ambition, flattered his imagination with hopes of preferment and distinguished honour; was disappointed, and wrote satires on human nature. Many who declaim with solemn sorrow and prolixity against the depravity and degeneracy of mankind, and overcharge the picture of human frailty with shades of the gloomiest tincture, imagine themselves the elected heroes of true religion, while they are merely indulging a splenetic humour.

On comparing the sorrow excited by repulsed and languishing affection, with that arising from the disappointment of selfish appetites, melancholy appears to be the temper produced by the one, misanthropy by the other. Both render us unsocial; but melancholy disposes us to complain, misanthropy to inveigh. The one remonstrates and retires; the other abuses and retires, and still abuses. The
one

one is softened with regret: the other virulent and fierce with rancour. Melancholy is amiable and benevolent, and wishes mankind would reform: misanthropy is malignant, and breathes revenge. The one is an object of compassion; the other of pity.

Though melancholy rules the mind of Jaques, he partakes of the leaven of human nature, and, moved by a sense of injury and disappointment,

Most invectively he pierceth through
The body of the country, city, court.

Instigated by sentiments of self-respect, if not of pride, he treats the condition of humanity, and the pursuits of mankind, as insignificant and uncertain. His invectives, therefore, are mingled with contempt, and expressed with humour. At the same time, he shows evident symptoms of a benevolent nature. He is interested in the improvement of mankind, and inveighs,

veighs, not entirely to indulge resentment, but with a desire to correct their depravity.

Duke. What ! you look merrily !

Jaq. A fool ! a fool ! I met a fool i' the forest,
A motley fool ! A miserable world !

As I do live by food, I met a fool ;
Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
And rail'd on lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms,—and yet a motley fool.

Good morrow, fool, quoth I :—No, Sir, quoth he.
Call me not fool, till Heaven hath sent me fortune :

And then he drew a dial from his poke ;
And looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says, very wisely, *It is ten o'clock ;*

Thus may we see, quoth he, how the world wags.

'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine ;

And after one hour more, 'twill be eleven ;

And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,

And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot.

And thereby hangs a tale.

O noble fool !

A worthy fool !—Motley's the only wear.

Duke. What fool is this ?

Jaq. O worthy fool !—One that hath been a
courtier ;

And says, if ladies be but young, and fair,

They have the gift to know it : and in his brain,

Which

Which is as dry as the remainder bisket
After a voyage, he hath strange places cramm'd
With observation, the which he vents
In mangled forms :—O that I were a fool !
I am ambitious for a motley coat.

Duke. Thou shalt have one.

Jaq. It is my only suit ;
Provided, that you weed your better judgments
Of all opinion, that grows rank in them,
That I am wise. I must have liberty
Withal ; as large a charter as the wind,
To blow on whom I please ; for so fools have :
And they that are most gauled with my folly,
They most must laugh : And why, Sir, must they so ?
The *why* is plain as way to parish church, &c.
Invest me in my motley ; give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
If they will patiently receive my medicine.

This mixture of melancholy and misanthropy in the character of Jaques, is more agreeable to human nature than the representation of either of the extremes ; for a complete misanthrope is as uncommon an object as a man who suffers injury without resentment. Mankind hold a
fort

sort of middle rank, and are in general too good for the one, and too bad for the other. As benevolence and sensibility are manifest in the temper of Jaques, we are not offended with his severity. By the oddity of his manner, by the keenness of his remarks, and shrewdness of his observations, while we are instructed, we are also amused. He is precisely what he himself tells us, "often wrapped in a most "humourous sadness." His sadness, of a mild and gentle nature, recommends him to our regard; his humour amuses.

A picture of this kind shews the fertility of Shakespeare's genius, his knowledge of human nature, and the accuracy of his pencil, much more than if he had represented in striking colours either of the component parts. By running them into one another, and by delineating their shades where they are gradually and almost imperceptibly blended together, the extent and delicacy of his conceptions, and his
amazing

amazing powers of execution are fully evident. Violent and impetuous passions are obvious, their colours are vivid, their features strongly marked, they may easily be discerned and easily copied. But the sensibility of the soul flows out in a variety of emotions and feelings, whose impulses are less apparent, and whose progress and operation may escape the notice of superficial observers; but whose influence in governing the conduct, and fashioning the tempers of mankind, is more extensive than we are apt to imagine. Affections and passions which gain an ascendant in the soul by silent and unobserved approaches, which, instead of impelling, seduce, and are not perceptible in the gestures or countenance till they have established a peculiar habit or temper, are represented to us by those only whom nature has distinguished; and whom, by rendering them exquisitely susceptible of every feeling, she has rendered supremely
happy,]

happy, or miserable beyond the common lot of humanity. To men of this character, endowed with lively imaginations, and a talent of easy expression, the most delicate emotions and affections of the soul submit themselves, suffering them to copy their true appearance, and exhibit them for the profit and pleasure of mankind: like those aerial agents, the sylphs, fairies, and other divinities of the poets, that preside over the seasons, and regulate the progress of vegetation, but which can only be rendered visible by the spells and authority of a skilful magician.

II. That Jaques, on account of disappointments in friendship, should become reserved and censorious, is consistent with human nature: but is it natural that he should abjure pleasure, and consider the world and every enjoyment of sense as frivolous and inexpedient? Ought he not rather to have recurred to them for consolation,

solation, and to have fought in them wherewithal to have relieved and solaced him? On the contrary, he expatiates with satisfaction on the insufficiency of human happiness, and on the insignificance of our pursuits.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players :
They have their exits and their entrances ;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms :
And then, the whining school-boy with his satchel,
And shining morning-face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school :—And then, the lover ;
Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad
Made to his mistress' eye-brow :—Then, a soldier ;
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel ;
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth :—And then, the justice,
In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances,
And so he plays his part :—The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloons ;
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side ;

His

His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shank ; and his big manly voice,
 Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
 And whistles in his sound :—Last scene of all,
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second childishness, and mere oblivion ;
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.

That the heart, sorrowful and dejected by the repulse of an ardent passion, is averse to pleasure of every kind, has been often observed. The mind, in a gay and healthful state, receives hope and enjoyment from every object around us. The same objects, if we languish and despond, are regarded with disgust or indifference. “ What path of life would you pursue ? ” said Poseidippus, morose and out of humour with his condition : “ In public you
 “ are perplexed with business and contention : at home, you are tired with
 “ cares : in the country, you are fatigued
 “ with labour : at sea, you are exposed to
 “ danger : in a foreign land, if rich, you
 “ are fearful ; if poor, neglected : have
 “ you

“ you a wife? expect sorrow: unmarried?
“ ried? your life is irksome: children
“ will make you anxious: childless, your
“ life is lonely: youth is foolish: and
“ gray-hairs feeble. Upon the whole,
“ the wise man would choose either not
“ to have existed, or to have died the
“ moment of his birth.” “Choose any path
“ of life,” replies the cheerful Metrodorus:
“ In the forum are profits and wise
“ debates: at home, relaxation: in the
“ country, the bounty of nature: the
“ sea-faring life is gainful: in a foreign
“ land, if wealthy, you are respected;
“ if poor, nobody knows it: are you
“ married? your house is cheerful: unmarried?
“ married? you live without care: Children
“ afford delight: childless, you have
“ no sorrow: youth is vigorous: and
“ old age venerable. The wise man,
“ therefore, would not choose but to have
“ existed.” Morose and splenetic moments
are transient; the soul recovers

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from

from them as from a lethargy, exerts her activity, and pursues enjoyment: but, in the temper of Jaques, moroseness is become habitual: he abandons the world, he contemns its pleasures, and buries himself in a cloister. The cause of this excessive severity requires a particular explanation.

Among the various desires and propensities implanted by nature in the constitution of every individual, some one passion, either by original and superior vigour, or by reiterated indulgence, gains an ascendant in the soul, and subdues every opposing principle; it unites with desires and appetites that are not of an opposite tendency, it bends them to its pleasure, and in their gratifications pursues its own. The man whose governing passion is pride, may also be social and beneficent, he may love his friends, and rejoice in their good fortune; but, even in their company, the desire of impressing them with an idea of his

his own importance, forever obtruding itself, produces disgust and aversion. The ruling passion, blended with others, augments their vehemence, and consequently enhances their pleasure; for the pleasure arising from the gratification of any passion, is proportioned to its force. Moreover, the sensations arising from the indulgence of the governing principle will necessarily be combined with those arising from the gratification of other appetites and desires; so intimately combined, that their union is not easily discerned, but by those who are accustomed to reflect on their feelings: yet, by their union, they affect the mind with a stronger impulse than if they were separately excited. Suppose the ruling passion thwarted: it ceases to operate with success: the force it communicated to other passions is withdrawn; consequently, their vehemence suffers abatement; and, consequently, the pleasure they yield is lessened. By the

discomfiture and disappointment of the governing principle, the pleasure arising from its gratification is no longer united with that arising from other active but subordinate principles: and thus, the pleasure resulting from subordinate principles, by the failure and absence of the adventitious pleasure with which it was formerly accompanied, is sensibly diminished. It is, therefore, manifest, that if social and beneficent affections, by gaining a superiority in the constitution, have heightened every other enjoyment, and if their exercise is suspended by disappointment, all the pleasures of sense or of ambition that formerly contributed to our felicity, though in themselves they are still the same; yet, being rest of their better part, of the spirit that enlivened them, they strike the mind so feebly, as only to awaken its attention to the loss it hath sustained; and, instead of affording comfort, they aggravate our misfortune.

We

We estimate their importance, not as they really are, but as they affect us in our present state ; we undervalue and despise them.

Qu'en ses plus beaux habits l'Aurore au teint vermeil,

Annonce à l'univers le retour du soleil,

Et, que devant son char, ses legeres fuivantes

Ouvrent de l'orient les portes eclatantes ;

Depuis que ma bergere a quitté ces beaux lieux,

Le ciel n'a plus ni jour, ni clarté pour mes yeux.

SEGRAIS.

We may also observe, that social and beneficent affections are in their own nature gay and exhilarating; and that, by extending their influence to other passions that are not opposed to them, they accelerate their motions and augment their vivacity. They animate, and even inflame the inferior appetites; and where reason, and other serious principles are not invested with supreme authority, they expose us to the anarchy of unlawful pas-

sions. There are many instances of men betrayed into habits of profligacy and dissipation, by the influence of their social affections. These men, disappointed and chagreened with the world, and consequently, with every pleasure, to whose energy the love of society contributed, consider the enjoyments arising from inferior appetites, not as they really are, when governed and guided by reason, but immoderate and pernicious, agreeably to their own experience. Reformed profligates are in general the most eloquent teachers of abstinency and self-denial. Polemo, converted by Xenocrates from a course of wild extravagance, became eminent in the school of Plato. The wisdom of Solomon was, in like manner, the child of folly. And the melancholy Jaques would not have moralized so profoundly, had he not been, as we are told in the play, a dissipated and sensual libertine.

To

To the foregoing observations, and to the consistency of Jaques's character, one thing may be objected: he is fond of music. But surely music is an enjoyment of sense; it affords pleasure; it is admitted to every joyous scene, and augments their gaiety. How can this be explained?

Though action seems essential to our happiness, the mind never exerts itself, unless it be actuated by some passion or desire. Thinking appears to be necessary to its existence; for surely that quality is necessary, without which the object cannot be conceived. But the existence of thinking depends upon thoughts or ideas: and, consequently, whether the mind is active or not, ideas are present to the thinking faculty. The motions and laws observed by our thoughts in the impressions they make on us, vary according as the soul may be influenced by various passions. At one time, they move with incredible celerity; they seem to rush upon us in the

wildest disorder; and those of the most opposite character and complexion unite in the same assemblage. At other times, they are slow, regular, and uniform. Now, it is obvious, that their rapidity must be occasioned by the eagerness of an impelling passion, and that their wild extravagance proceeds from the energies of various passions operating at once or alternately. Passions, appetites, and desires are the principles of action, and govern the motions of our thoughts; yet they are themselves dependent: they depend on our present humour, or state of mind, and on our temporary capacity of receiving pleasure or pain. It is always to obtain some enjoyment, or to avoid some pain or uneasiness, that we indulge the violence of desire, and enter eagerly into the hurry of thoughts and of action. But, if we are languid and desponding, if melancholy diffuses itself through the soul, we no longer cherish the gay illusions of hope;

no pleasure seems worthy of our attention ; we reject consolation, and brood over the images of our distress. In this state of mind, we are animated by no vigorous or lively passion ; our thoughts are quickened by no violent impulse : they resemble one another : we frequently return to the same images : our tone of mind continues the same, unless a desire or wish intervenes, that our condition were somehow different ; and as this suggests to us a state of circumstances and events very different from what we suffer, our affliction is aggravated by the contrast, and we sink into deeper sorrow. Precisely agreeable to this description, is the character of melancholy music. The sounds, that is, the ideas it conveys to the mind, move slowly ; they partake of little variety, or, if they are considerably varied, it is by a contrast that heightens the expression. The idea of a sound has certainly no resemblance to that of a misfortune :
yet,

yet, as they may affect us in a similar manner, it is probable they have some common qualities: and those we have endeavoured to show, consist in the manner by which they enter the mind. Slow sounds, gentle zephyrs, and murmuring streams, are agreeable to the afflicted lover. And the dreary whistling of the midnight wind through the crevices of a darksome cloister, cherisheth the melancholy of the trembling nun, and disposes her to a gloomy and austere devotion. Thus, the desire of Jaques seems perfectly suited to his character; for the music he requires is agreeable to his present temper.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.
Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot :
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remember'd not.

Thus we have endeavoured to illustrate, how social dispositions, by being excessive, and by suffering painful repulse, may render us unsocial and morose ; how

Goodness wounds itself,
And sweet affection proves the spring of woe.

If these reasonings have any foundation in nature, they lead us to some conclusions that deserve attention. To judge concerning the conduct of others, and to indulge observations on the instability of human enjoyments, may assist us in the discipline of our own minds, and in correcting our pride and excessive appetites. But to allow reflections of this kind to become habitual, and to preside in our souls, is to counteract the good intentions of nature. In order, therefore, to anticipate a disposition so very painful to ourselves, and so disagreeable

176 THE CHARACTER, &c.

disagreeable to others, we ought to learn, before we engage in the commerce of the world, what we may expect from society in general, and from every individual*. But if, previous to experience, we are unable to form just judgments of ourselves and others, we must beware of despondency, and of opinions injurious to human nature. Let us ever remember, that all men have peculiar interests to pursue ; that every man ought to exert himself vigorously in his own employment ; and that, if we are useful and blameless, we shall have the favour of our fellow-citizens. Let us love mankind ; but let our affections be duly chastened. Be independent, if possible ; but not insensible.

* Bruyere.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

ON THE

CHARACTER OF IMOGEN.

CR O W D E D theatres have applauded **I**M O G E N. There is a pleasing softness and delicacy in this agreeable character, that render it peculiarly interesting. Love is the ruling passion; but it is love ratified by wedlock, gentle, constant, and refined.

The strength and peculiar features of a ruling passion, and the power of other principles to influence its motions and moderate

derate its impetuosity, are principally manifest, when it is rendered violent by fear, hope, grief, and other emotions of a like nature, excited by the concurrence of external circumstances. When love is the governing passion, those concomitant and secondary emotions are called forth by separation, the apprehension of inconstancy, and the absolute belief of disaffection. On separation, they dispose us to sorrow and regret: on the apprehension of inconstancy, they excite jealousy or solicitude: and the certainty of disaffection begets despondency. These three situations shall direct the order and arrangement of the following discourse.

I. Cymbeline, instigated against his daughter, by the insinuations of her malicious step-dame, and incensed against Posthumus Leonatus, who was secretly married to Imogen, banishes him from his court and kingdom. The lovers are overwhelmed

whelmed with sorrow: and the princess, informed by Pisanio of the particular circumstances of her husband's departure, expresses herself in the following manner:

I would have broke mine eye-strings; crack'd 'em, but
To look upon him; till the diminution
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle:
Nay, follow'd him, till he had melted from
The smallness of a gnat to air; and then
Have turn'd mine eye, and wept *.

These lines express the reluctance of the heart to part with the object of its affection.

* There is a passage very similar to this in Ovid's story of Ceyx and Halcyone.

Sustulit illa

*Humentes oculos, stantemque in puppe recurva,
Concussaque manu dantem sibi signa, maritum
Prima videt; redditque notas: ubi terra recessit
Longius, atque oculi nequeunt cognoscere vultus,
Dum licet, insequitur fugientem lumine pinum.
Hæc quoque, ut haud poterat, spatio submota, videri;
Vela tamen spectat summo fluitantia malo:
Ut nec vela videt, vacuum petit anxia lectum;
Seque toro ponit. Renovat lectusque locusque
Halcyones lacrymas.*

tions,

tions, and the efforts of passion struggling with disappointment: that the sentiments they convey are natural and agreeable to the conduct of the passions, may very easily be illustrated.

Some portion of the complacency and delight we receive from the presence of those we love and admire, is annexed to their idea, or to our thoughts concerning them when they are absent. The idea of Leonatus would be, of all others, the most agreeable to Imogen; and the secret wishes and desires of her heart would for ever recal him to her remembrance. But ideas of memory and imagination, though they may be exceedingly lively, though they entertain the mind with various and unusual images, and are capable of cherishing and inflaming the most vehement passions, yield little enjoyment, compared with actual sensation. The conviction of present existence distinguishes, in an eminent manner, the ideas received from objects

jects striking immediately on our senses, from the operations of memory, and the illusions of fancy. Fancy may dazzle and amuse: but reflection, and the consciousness of our present situation are forever intruding: and the vision vanishes at their approach. In the present instance, however, the figure of Leonatus can hardly be distinguished: and the sensation received by Imogen is imperfect, and consequently painful. This leads us to a second observation. A thought never fluctuates in the mind solitary and independent, but is connected with an assemblage, formed of thoughts depending upon one another. In every group or assemblage, some ideas are pre-eminent, and some subordinate. The principal figure makes the strongest impression; and the rest are only attended to, on account of their relation to the leading image. The mention of sun-rising, not only excites the idea of a luminous body ascending the eastern sky, but suggests

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the images of party-coloured clouds, meadows spangled with dew, and mists hovering on the mountains. Writers, whose works are addressed to the imagination, studying to imitate the various appearances of nature, and, at the same time, sensible that a complete enumeration of every circumstance and quality of an object would be no less tiresome than impossible, are diligent in selecting the leading and capital ideas, upon which the greatest number of other images are dependent. Discernment, in the choice of circumstances, and skill in their arrangement, are, according to Longinus, the principles of true description. Now, we observed above, that the reality of an object enhances the pleasure of the perception; and therefore that the perceptions we receive by the senses are preferred to representations merely fancied. But suppose we receive a single perception from an object exceedingly interesting; this single, and
even

even imperfect perception, makes a lively impression, and becomes the leading idea of an assemblage. Though all the subordinate and adventitious images are the mere coinage of fancy ; yet, on account of their intimate union with the primary idea, they operate on the mind, as if their archetype really existed. They receive the stamp of reality from the primary perception upon which they depend ; they are deemed legitimate, and are preferred to the mere illusions of fancy. In this manner, the distant, and even imperfect view of Leonatus suggests a train of ideas more agreeable than those of memory and imagination : and it is not till this transient consolation is removed, that Imogen would have ‘ turned her eye and wept.’

The propriety of the following sentiments depends on the same principles with the former : for the belief that Leonatus, at certain fixed periods, was employed in discharging the tender offices of affection,

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would

would give the ideal the authority of actual perception, and its concomitant images would becherished with romantic fondness,

I did not take my leave of him, but had
Most pretty things to say : ere I could tell him,
How I would think of him at certain hours,
Such thoughts, and such ;—or have charg'd him,
At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,
To encounter me with orisons, for then
I am in heaven for him.

But why, says the critic, consume time and attention on actions so frivolous and unimportant ? Can they disclose to us any of the arcana of nature ? Can they reveal any of her hidden mysteries ? Can they explain the wonderful mechanism of the understanding ? Or discover the labyrinths of the heart ?

To attend to familiar and common objects is not unworthy even of a philosopher. By observing the accidental fall of an apple, Newton explained the motions of the celestial bodies : and a principle illustrated

illustrated by the easy experiment of bringing two drops of water within their sphere of attraction, accounts for the progress of vegetation. The association we have now endeavoured to explain, accounts for many strange appearances in the history and manners of mankind. It explains that amazing attachment to relics, which forms an essential part of many modern religions, which fills the convents of Europe with more fragments of the cross than would cover mount Lebanon, and with more tears of the Blessed Virgin than would water the Holy Land. These objects confirm particular facts to the zealous votaries, and realize a train of ideas favourable to the ardour of their enthusiasm. It is not merely the handkerchief stained with the blood of Jesus, that moves, shakes, and convulses the pale and pensive nun, who, at her midnight orisons bathes it with her tears: her emotions are occasioned by the idea of particular sufferings

enforced on her imagination, by the view of that melancholy object. From the same association we may deduce the passion for pilgrimage, the rage of crusades, and all the consequences of that fatal distemper. Moved by a propensity depending on the same principles, men of ingenuity, enamoured of the Muses, traverse the regions they frequented, explore every hill, and seek their footsteps in every valley. The groves of Mantua, and the cascades of Anio, are not lovelier than other groves and cascades ; yet we view them with peculiar rapture. We tread as on consecrated ground, we regard those objects with veneration, which yielded ideas to the minds of Virgil and Horace ; and we seem to enjoy a certain ineffable intercourse with those elegant and enlightened spirits.

Trivial, therefore, as the sentiments and expressions of Imogen may appear, by attending to the principles upon which they depend, they open the mind to the contemplation

templation of extensive objects. Considering them in regard to character, they exhibit to us uncommon affection, sensibility, and mildness of disposition. They are not embittered with invective: she complains of the severity of Cymbeline; but does not accuse: she expresses sorrow; but not resentment: and she reflects on the injustice of the Queen as the cause of her sufferings, rather than the object of her anger. Exceedingly injured, and exceedingly afflicted, she neglects the injury, and dwells on the distress.

Ere I could

Give him that parting kiss, which I had set
Betwixt two charming words; comes in my father;
And, like the tyrannous breathing of the North,
Shakes all our buds from growing.

A father cruel, and a step-dame false;
A foolish suitor to a wedded lady,
That hath her husband banish'd:—O that husband!
My supreme crown of grief! and those repeated
Vexations of it.

Most miserable
Is the desire that's glorious.

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II. We proceed, in the second place, to consider the state of Imogen's mind labouring with doubts, and pained with the apprehension of a change in the affections of Posthumus.

Nothing, in the structure of the human mind, appears more inexplicable than the seeming inconsistency of passion. Averse from believing the person we love or esteem capable of ingratitude, we are often prone to suspicion, and are alarmed with the slightest symptoms of disaffection. Whoever warns you of the treachery of a professing friend, or of the inconstancy of a smiling mistress, is treated with scorn or resentment: yet with a scrupulous and critical accuracy, you investigate the meanings of an accidental expression; you employ more sagacity and discernment than might govern a nation, to weigh the importance of a nod; and a trivial oversight or inattention will cast you into despair. The heart of Imogen,

gen, attached to Leonatus by tender and sincere affection, is yet capable of apprehension, and liable to solicitude.

Iachimo, with an intention of betraying her, sensible, at the same time, that infidelity and neglect are the only crimes unpardonable in the sight of a lover, and well aware of the address necessary to infuse suspicion into an ingenuous mind, disguises his inhuman intention with the affectation of a violent and sudden emotion. He seems rapt in admiration of Imogen, and expresses sentiments of deep astonishment.

Ia. What ! are men mad ? hath nature given them
eyes

To see this vaulted arch, and the rich crop
Of sea and land ? which can distinguish 'twixt
The fiery orbs above, and the twinn'd stones
Upon the number'd beech ? and can we not
Partition make with spectacles so precious
'Twixt fair and foul ?

Imo. What makes your admiration ?

Ia. It cannot be i' th' eye ; for apes and monkeys,
'Twixt two such she's, would chatter this way, and
Contemn

Contemn with mowesthe other : nor i' the judgment ;
 For idiots, in this case of favour, would
 Be wisely definite.—

Imo. What, dear Sir,
 Thus raps you ? are you well ?

We never feel any passion or violent emotion without a cause, either real or imagined. We are never conscious of anger, but when we apprehend ourselves injured ; and never feel esteem without the conviction of excellence in the object. Sensible, as it were by intuition, of this invariable law in the conduct of our passions, we never see others very violently agitated without a conviction of their having sufficient cause, or that they are themselves convinced of it. If we see a man deeply afflicted, we are persuaded that he has suffered some dreadful calamity, or that he believes it to be so. Upon this principle, which operates instinctively, and almost without being observed, is founded that capital rule in oratorical composition, “ That he who would affect and
 “ convince

“convince his audience, ought to have
“his own mind convinced and affected.”

Accordingly, the crafty Italian, availing himself of this propensity, counterfeits admiration and astonishment: and Imogen, deceived by the specious artifice, is inclined to believe him. Moved with fearful curiosity, she inquires about Leonatus; receives an answer well calculated to alarm her; and, of consequence, betrays uneasiness.

Imo. Continues well my Lord his health, 'beseech you?

Ia. Well, Madam.

Imo. Is he dispos'd to mirth? I hope he is.

Ia. Exceeding pleasant; none a stranger there
So merry, and so gamefome; he is called
The Britain reveller.

Imo. When he was here,
He did incline to sadness, and oft times
Not knowing why.

By representing the sentiments of Leonatus as unfavourable to marriage and
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the fair sex, he endeavours to stimulate her disquietude.

Ia. The jolly Briton cries,
Can my sides hold, to think, that man, who knows
By history, report, or his own proof,
What woman is, yea, what he cannot choose
But must be,
Will his free hours languish for assured bondage?

Imo. Will my Lord say so?

Ia. Ay, Madam, with his eyes in flood with laughter.
But Heaven knows,
Some men are much to blame.

Imo. Not he, I hope.

This expression of hope is an evident symptom of her anxiety. If we are certain of any future good, we are confident and expect: we only hope when the event is doubtful.

Iachimo practises every art; and, by expressing pity for her condition, he makes farther progress in her good opinion. Pity supposes calamity; and the imagination of Imogen, thus irritated and alarmed, conceives no other cause of compassion than

than the infidelity of Leonatus. The mysterious conduct of Iachimo heightens her uneasiness; for the nature and extent of her misfortune not being precisely ascertained, her apprehensions render it excessive. The reluctance he discovers, and his seeming unwillingness to accuse her husband, are evidences of his being attached to him, and give his surmises credit. Imogen, thus agitated and afflicted, is in no condition to deliberate coolly; and, as her anxiety grows vehement, she becomes credulous and unwary. Her sense of propriety, however, and the delicacy of her affections, preserve their influence, and she conceals her impatience by indirect inquiries.

Ia. Whilst I am bound to wonder, I am bound
To pity.

Imo. What do you pity, Sir?

Ia. Two creatures, heartily.

Imo. Am I one, Sir?

You look on me; what wreck discern you in me
Deserves your pity?

Ia.

Ia. Lamentable ! what !

To hide me from the radiant fun, and solace
I' the dungeon by a snuff !

Imo. I pray you, Sir,

Deliver with more openness your answers
To my demands. Why do you pity me ?

Iachimo's abrupt and impassioned demeanour, his undoubted friendship for Leonatus, the apparent interest he takes in the concerns of Imogen, and his reluctance to unfold the nature of her misfortune, adding impatience to her anxiety, and so augmenting the violence of her emotions, destroy every doubt of his sincerity, and dispose her implicitly to believe him. He, accordingly, proceeds with boldness, and, under the appearance of sorrow and indignation, hazards a more direct impeachment. To have bewailed her unhappy fate, and to have accused Leonatus in terms of bitterness and reproach, would have suited the injuries she had received, and the violence of disappointed passion. But Shakespeare, superior to all mankind

mankind in the invention of characters, hath fashioned the temper of Imogen with lineaments no less peculiar than lovely. Sentiments amiably refined, and a sense of propriety uncommonly exquisite, suppress the utterance of her sorrow, and restrain her resentment. Knowing that suspicion is allied to weakness, and unwilling to asperse the fame of her husband, she replies with a spirit of meekness and resignation.

My Lord, I fear,
Has forgot Britain.

Formerly she expressed hope, when the emotion she felt was fear: here she expresses fear, though fully satisfied of her misfortune.

There is a certain state of mind full of sorrow, when the approach of evil is manifest and unavoidable. Our reason is then darkened, and the soul, sinking under the apprehension of misery, suffers
direful

direful eclipse, and trembles, as at the dissolution of nature. Unable to endure the painful impression, we almost wish for annihilation, and incapable of averting the threatened danger, we endeavour, though absurdly, to be ignorant of its approach. 'Let me hear no more,' cries the Princess, convinced of her misfortune, and overwhelmed with anguish.

Iachimo, confident of success, and, persuaded that the wrongs of Imogen would naturally excite resentment, suggests the idea of revenge. Skilful to infuse suspicion, he knew not the purity of refined affection. Imogen, shocked and astonished at his infamous offer, is immediately prejudiced against his evidence: her mind recovers vigour by the renovated hope of her husband's constancy, and by indignation against the insidious informer: and she vents her displeasure with sudden and unexpected vehemence.

Imo.

Imo. What ho, Pifanio!—

Ia. Let me my service tender on your lips.

Imo. Away! I do condemn mine ears, that have
So long attended thee.

This immediate transition from a dejected and desponding tone of mind, to a vigorous and animated exertion, effectuated by the infusion of hope and just indignation, is very natural and striking.

The inquietude of Imogen, softened by affection, and governed by a sense of propriety, exhibits a pattern of the most amiable and exemplary meekness. The emotions she discovers belong to solicitude rather than to jealousy. The features of solicitude are sorrowful and tender: jealousy is fierce, wrathful, and vindictive. Solicitude is the object of compassion mixed with affection; jealousy excites compassion combined with terror.

III. The same meekness and tender
dejection that engage our sympathy in
N the

the interests of Imogen, and render even her suspicions amiable, preserve their character and influence, when she suffers actual calamity. Leonatus, deceived by the calumnies of Iachimo, suffers the pangs of a jealous emotion, and, in the heat of his resentment, commissions Pisanio to take away her life. But the sagacious attendant, convinced of the malignity of the accusation, disobeys his master; and, actuated by compassion, reveals his inhuman purpose. The stroke that inflicts the deepest wound on a virtuous and ingenuous nature, is the accusation of guilt. Those who are incapable of criminal acts and intentions, instigated by a stronger abhorrence of a guilty conduct than others less virtuous than themselves, imagine, if, by any unhappy mischance, they are falsely and maliciously accused, that they are the objects of strong abhorrence. Of minds very easily affected, and susceptible of every feeling, persecuted by malice, or
overwhelmed

overwhelmed with infamy and the reproach of mankind, which they feel more severely than those who have less integrity, and, consequently, a worse opinion of others than they have, are exposed for a time to all the torment of conscious turpitude. The blush of guilty confusion often inflames the complexion of innocence, and disorders her lovely features. To be rescued from undeserved affliction, Imogen flies for relief to the review of her former conduct; and, surpris'd at the accusation, and indignant of the charge, she triumphs in conscious virtue.

False to his bed ! what is to be false ?
To lie in watch there, and to think on him ?
To weep 'twixt clock and clock ? if sleep charge nature
To break it with a fearful dream of him,
And cry myself awake ? That's false to his bed ?

Yet resentment is so natural in cases of heinous injury, that it arises even in minds of the mildest temper. It arises, however, without any excessive or unseemly agitation:

tion : its duration is exceedingly transient. It is governed in its utterance by the memory of former friendship : and, if the blame can be transferred to any insidious or sly seducer, who may have prompted the evil we complain of, we wreck upon them the violence of our displeasure.

I false ! thy conscience witness, Iachimo—
 Thou didst accuse him of incontinency :
 Thou then look'dst like a villain : now, methinks,
 Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy*,
 Whose mother was her painting, hath betray'd him.

The resentment of Imogen is of short continuance : it is a sudden solitary flash, extinguished instantly in her sorrow.

Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion.

It is not the malice of a crafty step-dame that moves the heart of Imogen to complain ; nor the wrath of her incensed and deluded parent ; nor that she, bred up in

* The word *fainting* in this passage is a substantive noun, synonymous to portrait.

softness,

softness, and little accustomed to suffer hardships and sorrow, should wander amid solitary rocks and deserts, exposed to perils, famine, and death: it is, that she is forsaken, betrayed, and persecuted by him, on whose constancy she relied for protection, and to whose tenderness she entrusted her repose. Of other evils she is not insensible; but this is the 'supreme crown' of her grief.' Cruelty and ingratitude are abhorred by the spectator, and resented by the sufferer. But, when the temper of the person injured is peculiarly gentle, and the author of the injury the object of confirmed affection, the mind, after the first emotion, is more apt to languish in despondency than continue inflamed with resentment. The sense of misfortune, rather than the sense of injury, rules the disposition of Imogen, and, instead of venting invective, she laments the misery of her condition.

Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion;
And, for I am richer than to hang by the walls,
I must be ript.—To pieces with me!

If a crime is committed by a person with whom we are unconnected, or who has no pretensions to pre-eminent virtue, we feel indignation against the individual; but form no conclusions against the species. The case is different, if we are connected with him by any tender affection, and regard him as of superior merit. Love and friendship, according to the immutable conduct of every passion, lead us to magnify, in our imaginations, the distinguished qualities of those we love. The rest of mankind are ranked in a lower order, and are valued no otherwise than as they resemble this illustrious model. But, perceiving depravity where we expected perfection, mortified and disappointed, that appearances of rectitude, believed by us most sincere and unchangeable, were merely specious and exterior, we become
suspicious

suspicious of every pretension to merit, and regard the rest of mankind, of whose integrity we have had less positive evidence, with cautious and unkind reserve.

True honest men being heard, like false Æneas,
Were, in his time, thought false : and Sinon's
weeping

Did scandal many a holy tear ; took pity
From most true wretchedness. So thou, Posthumus,
Wilt lay the leaven on all proper men :
Goodly, and gallant, shall be false and perjurd,
From thy great fail.

Imogen, conscious of her innocence, convinced of Leonatus's perfidy, and overwhelmed with sorrow, becomes careless of life, and offers herself a willing sacrifice to her husband's cruelty.

Be thou honest :

Do thou thy master's bidding : when thou seest him,
A little witness my obedience. Look !

I draw the sword myself : take it, and hit

The innocent mansion of my love, my heart :

Pr'ythee, dispatch :

The lamb intreats the butcher. Where's thy knife ?

Thou

Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding,
When I desire it too.

I shall conclude these observations, by explaining more particularly, how the repulse of a ruling and habituated passion could dispose Imogen to despondency, and render her careless of life: in other words, what is the origin of despair; or, by what lamentable perversion those, who are susceptible of the pleasures of life, and in situations capable of enjoying them, become dissatisfied, and rise from the feast prematurely.

Happiness depends upon the gratification of our desires and passions. The happiness of Titus arose from the indulgence of a beneficent temper: Epaminondas reaped enjoyment from the love of his country. The love of fame was the source of Cæsar's felicity: and the gratification of groveling appetites gave delight to Vitellius. It has also been observed, that some one passion generally assumes a pre-eminence

eminence in the mind, and not only predominates over other appetites and desires; but contends with reason, and is often victorious. In proportion as one passion gains strength, the rest languish and are enfeebled. They are seldom exercised; their gratifications yield transient pleasure; they become of slight importance, are dispirited, and decay. Thus our happiness is attached to one ruling and ardent passion. But our reasonings, concerning future events, are weak and short-sighted. We form schemes of felicity that can never be realized, and cherish affections that can never be gratified. If, therefore, the disappointed passion has been long encouraged, if the gay visions of hope and imagination have long administered to its violence, if it is confined by habit in the temper and constitution, if it has superseded the operations of other active principles, and so enervated their strength, its disappointment will be embittered; and
sorrow,

forrow, prevented by no other passion, will prey, unabating, on the desolate abandoned spirit. We may also observe, that none are more liable to afflictions of this sort, than those to whom nature hath given extreme sensibility: alive to every impression, their feelings are exquisite: they are eager in every pursuit: their imaginations are vigorous, and well adapted to fire them. They live, for a time, in a state of anarchy, exposed to the inroads of every passion; and, though possessed of singular abilities, their conduct will be capricious. Glowing with the warmest affections, open, generous, and candid; yet, prone to inconstancy, they are incapable of lasting friendship. At length, by force of repeated indulgence, some one passion becomes habitual, occupies the heart, seizes the understanding, and, impatient of resistance or controul, weakens or extirpates every opposing principle: disappointment ensues: no passion remains to administer comfort: and

and the original sensibility which promoted this disposition, will render the mind more susceptible of anguish, and yield it a prey to despondency. We ought, therefore, to beware of limiting our felicity to the gratification of any individual passion. Nature, ever wise and provident, hath endowed us with capacities for various pleasures, and hath opened to us many fountains of happiness: 'Let no tyrannous passion, let no rigid doctrine deter thee; drink of the streams, be moderate, and be grateful.'

THE END.



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